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...and where Verstappen could be beaten in 2023

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Silverstone Spring Start
Saturday 22nd April

Join us for a fantastic day of vintage racing as Silverstone returns to the traditional Spring Start slot to open the VSCC's 2023 Race Season.

Spectators are in for a treat as not only is there racing to watch, the morning hosts an AutoSOLO, a series of driving tests, which are running alongside the main event. With an open paddock, this is your chance to get up close and personal to truly historic cars.

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Mike Griffin

Sue Ballard

SUTTON
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Getting under the skin of the F1 car they all have to beat

Just what is it that makes the Red Bull RB19 so good? That's a question several rival designers in the Formula 1 paddock are doubtless asking themselves and is one we take on in this issue.

Jake Boxall-Legge looks at how the car is an improvement over the championship-winning and record-breaking RB18, as well as the team and driver factors that make Red Bull so hard to beat (page 18). Perhaps even more interestingly for neutral fans, he also ponders where Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez *could* be vulnerable in 2023.

Le Mans will celebrate its centenary in June and we're already kicking off our celebration of the greatest endurance race in the world. In the first of our Le Mans 100 series on the major manufacturers taking on the 2023 24 Hours (p28), Gary Watkins reveals Toyota's relationship with the event and why winning this year is so important for a team that has won the past five Le Mans contests.

A popular venue that is no more, at least from a motorsport point of view, is Pukekohe. Andrew van Leeuwen looks at why the former New Zealand Grand Prix venue was so special with a driver who famously made the place his own two decades ago (p34)...

Goodwood Circuit was revived 25 years ago and Paul Lawrence is your guide to the Members' Meeting in our preview on p38.

The Easter weekend was a big one for UK motorsport and our 19-page National section covers the highlights from p49.

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor
kevin.turner@autosport.com

NEXT WEEK 20 APRIL

The rise of Aston Martin
Fernando Alonso's latest F1 challenge, plus our bumper BTCC preview

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Autosport editorial
Autosport Media UK Ltd
The Power House
Isleworth
TW7 6QG

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autosport@autosport.com

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Getty Images/Red Bull Content Pool

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Massa won finale in Brazil, and put brave face on title defeat

Massa eyes legal challenge to 2008

FORMULA 1

Felipe Massa is weighing up legal routes to challenge the outcome of the 2008 Formula 1 World Championship that he lost by a single point to Lewis Hamilton – as if waiting four hours to decide third place in the 2023 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix wasn't enough...

The ex-Ferrari driver has been prompted by recent comments from Bernie Ecclestone, who now says that he and the FIA were aware at the time that Nelson Piquet Jr's scandalous safety car-inducing crash in the Singapore GP was deliberate. The consequence of this shunt, which helped Piquet's Renault team-mate Fernando Alonso win the race, was a botched pitstop for Massa that dropped him to an eventual 13th place, while McLaren driver Hamilton grabbed third position to help tee up the famous last-lap decider in Brazil.

Details about Piquet's deliberate actions emerged in public the following year. They resulted in Renault facing a two-year suspended ban from F1, while team boss Flavio Briatore and technical chief Pat Symonds were also punished for their roles. At the time, Massa led calls for the FIA to cancel the Singapore result, but the governing body's statutes made that impossible because the classification from each season is set in stone under the International Sporting Code once the FIA Awards ceremony is complete. Furthermore, the FIA's investigation into the events of Singapore did not uncover any evidence to suggest that Alonso and the wider Renault team knew of the crash plan or assisted in its execution, so the governing body felt it would have been unfair to change the result.

Ecclestone now says he knew at the time that Piquet crash was deliberate

SUTTON

But Massa thinks there are grounds to review matters once again. Ecclestone's admission that he and the FIA were aware of the rules breach before the end of 2008 – within the window when action could have been taken to alter the outcome – was made in an interview with the *F1-Insider* website last month. "We wanted to protect the sport and save it from a huge scandal," he said. "That's why I used angelic tongues to persuade my former driver Nelson Piquet to keep calm for the time being... We had enough information in time to investigate the matter. According to the statutes, we should have cancelled the race in Singapore under these conditions. That means it would never have happened for the championship standings. And then Felipe Massa would have become world champion and not Lewis Hamilton."

Those remarks have drawn interest from Massa, who says he wants to evaluate whether there are grounds to take the matter further. Speaking to Autosport, he said: "There is a rule that says that when a championship is decided, from the moment the driver receives the champion's trophy, things can no longer be changed, even if it has been proven a theft. At the time, Ferrari's lawyers told me about this rule.

COATES

Massa did all he needed to do in Interlagos finale

FERRARO

motorsport IMAGES

title loss

We went to other lawyers and the answer was that nothing could be done. So, I logically believed in this situation.

"But after 15 years, we hear that the [former] owner of the category says that he found out in 2008, together with the president of the FIA, and they did nothing to not tarnish the name of F1. This is very sad, to know the result of this race was supposed to be cancelled and I would have a title. In the end, I was the one who lost the most with this result. So, we are going after it to understand all this.

"I intend to study the situation; study what the laws say, and the rules. We have to have an idea of what it is possible to do... I would never go after it thinking financially. I would go after it thinking about justice."

While Massa plans to look into the matter, there do not appear to be any routes to get the result of the 2008 Singapore GP cancelled. The FIA International Sporting Code does not allow protests after a race, and any right to request a review expires 14 calendar days after a competition – and four days prior to the date of that year's FIA prizegiving ceremony. Furthermore, the FIA's judicial system is clear that the highest authority to make any ruling is the independent International Court of Appeal, and that anyone involved in a championship agrees to abide by this. So, there are no alternative courts that Massa could use.

JONATHAN NOBLE & ERICK GABRIEL

...while Sainz wants more recent result overturned

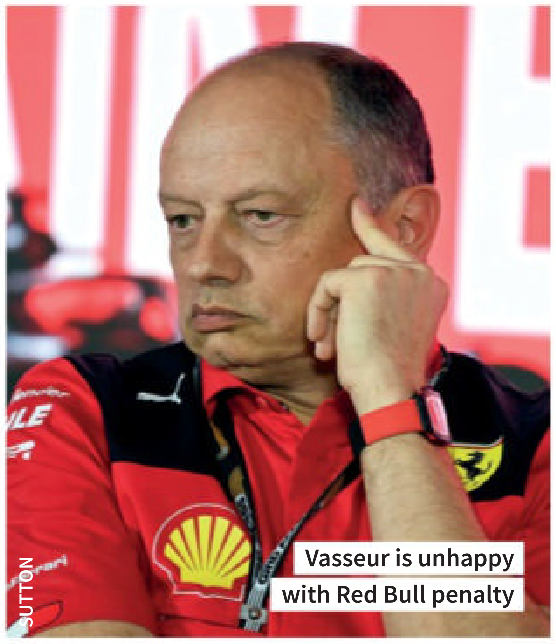
FORMULA 1

Ferrari has requested a right to review with the FIA to potentially overturn the five-second penalty handed to Carlos Sainz in the recent Australian Grand Prix that dropped him from fourth position to 12th in the results.

The reprimand for tagging Fernando Alonso during the third standing start of a heavily disrupted Melbourne race was the "most unfair penalty ever", according to Sainz at least. He and the team feel particularly aggrieved that for such a costly hit, they were not given a prior opportunity to put a defence to the stewards and that for a similar Turn 1 shunt with Nyck de Vries, Williams rookie Logan Sargeant walked away scot-free. If Ferrari is to be successful, it must present "significant and relevant new" information, which will likely heavily rely on data traces unavailable to Race Control in the heat of the moment, and conflicting precedent of past incidents. A decision from the governing body is expected before the Azerbaijan GP later this month.

Meanwhile, for the longer term, new Ferrari team boss Fred Vasseur says his Maranello technical department has ruled out introducing a 'B-spec' car concept this season. That's despite Sainz's comments that more minor in-session set-up tweaks are clearly no longer sufficient to close the gap to 2023 star performer Red Bull.

Vasseur reckons three stages of upgrades over the coming months, rather than a major overhaul, will do the trick. He added that the cost cap meant that such radical change was no longer viable. The Frenchman explained: "We are sticking to the plan. We have made some adjustments in terms of balance and behaviour, and it was much better in Melbourne, and we'll continue in this direction. It's not a B-car, if that is what you want to say. We won't come with something completely different. We will continue to update this one and we'll try to update massively."


SUTTON

Vasseur is unhappy with Red Bull penalty

Vasseur has also taken a swipe at Red Bull, saying the $7million fine and 10% cut in aerodynamic testing it received from the FIA for breaking the 2021 budget cap was not harsh enough.

"I think it was not a penalty," he said. "It was very low. If you consider that basically, we will improve a bit less than one second over the season in terms of aero, you get the penalty of 10% of this, it's 0.1s. And as it's not a linear progression, it's probably less, and you are allowed to spend this money somewhere else. It means that for me, the penalty is marginal."

ADAM COOPER & JONATHAN NOBLE

P13 OPINION

Sainz wants his fourth place back

SUTTON

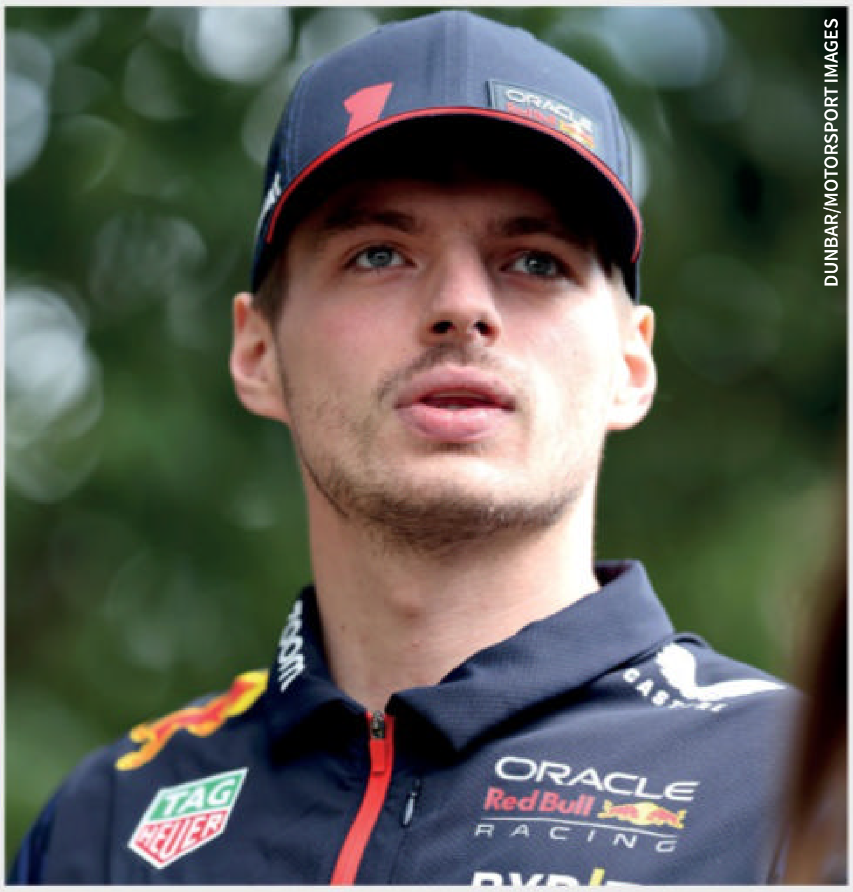
Verstappen: don't change sprint format

FORMULA 1

Max Verstappen reckons that Formula 1 chiefs would be wrong to add an extra qualifying session to sprint race weekends to boost the spectacle. Drivers and series organisers led talks during the Australian Grand Prix to scrub the redundant FP2 from a sprint round in favour of a second qualifying. This would allow the days to stand alone rather than have the Saturday race result determine the grid for the Sunday main event, a factor that disincentivises late overtaking moves in favour of preserving a safer starting position.

But the world champion says he is "not a fan at all" of this proposal, stating that if the plan is to keep increasing the number of rounds on the calendar beyond the current 23, it is unsustainable to expand the timetable also. "The weekend becomes even more intense and we're already doing so many races," said Verstappen. "That is not the right way to go at it. I understand they want to have basically every day exciting, but then I think maybe it's better to just reduce the weekend, only race on Saturday and Sunday and make those two days exciting... We're heading into seasons where you have at one point 24, 25 races, and if we then start adding even more stuff, it's not worth it for me. I'm not enjoying that.

"Even if you change the format, I don't find it's the DNA of Formula 1 to do these kinds of sprint races. F1 is about getting the most out of it in qualifying and then having an amazing Sunday, good long race distances."


DUNBAR/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

It was initially thought unlikely that tweaks would be adopted for the season's resumption in Azerbaijan later this month for its first sprint contest of 2023. The four-week break after Melbourne means many parties are on holiday, while the window is tight for Pirelli to provide enough tyres. But a concerted push now means the new format could be introduced for Baku.

FILIP CLEEREN

New Isotta has first track run at Vallelunga

WEC

The new Isotta Fraschini Le Mans Hypercar was undertaking its first laps on track as Autosport closed for press. The Tipo 6 LMH Competizione was in the middle of a two-day shakedown at Vallelunga as the Italian manufacturer and partner team Vector Sport gear up for a projected World Endurance Championship debut at Monza in July.

The test followed protracted running on a four-wheel-drive dyno at AVL Racetech as well as a private test to verify the car's aerodynamics at the Sauber wind tunnel. "Now we are ready to go on the track," said Isotta motorsport boss Claudio Berro ahead of the first run.

Driving duties at the shakedown scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday were handed to Maurizio Mediani, who is a test driver for the Michelotto Engineering organisation masterminding the Tipo 6 project. The 54-year-old Italian, who raced SMP Racing's BR01 Nissan-engined LMP2 car in the 2016 WEC, played a key role in the simulator programme and was chosen, said Berro, "because it is important to have someone in the car who has been working already with the engineers and technicians".

The Tipo 6 turns its very first lap in anger

ISOTTA FRASCHINI

The Vallelunga run will be a prelude to an intensive test programme in May as Isotta and the British Vector team gear up for racing on a non-points basis in the Monza 6 Hours. A race debut at home on 9 July will be dependent on the FIA and WEC promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest inviting the car to take part on a race-by-race basis.

"We will calibrate everything on track and then probably go back to the dyno and the wind tunnel for final checks, and then we can begin our test programme," explained Berro. "In May we can expect to have two or three tests." Berro wouldn't be drawn on the identity of the race drivers for the Isotta.

GARY WATKINS

BOSS GP The crazy world of Antonio Pizzonia has taken a new twist – the Brazilian has embarked upon a full-season racing comeback in Europe's BOSS GP Racing Series at the wheel of an HS Engineering-run World Series by Renault car, powered by a 4.5-litre Gibson V8 engine. Unsurprisingly, Pizzonia, pictured leading a bunch here, took a double victory in the Open class at last weekend's Paul Ricard season-opener. Overall and F1 honours went the way of BOSS stalwart Ingo Gerstl in his Toro Rosso STR1 (inset left), while the Jaguar R2 of Didier Sirgue (inset right) was another contender. **Photos by Angelo Poletto**

Lundqvist oval test raises hopes of IndyCar graduation

INDYCAR

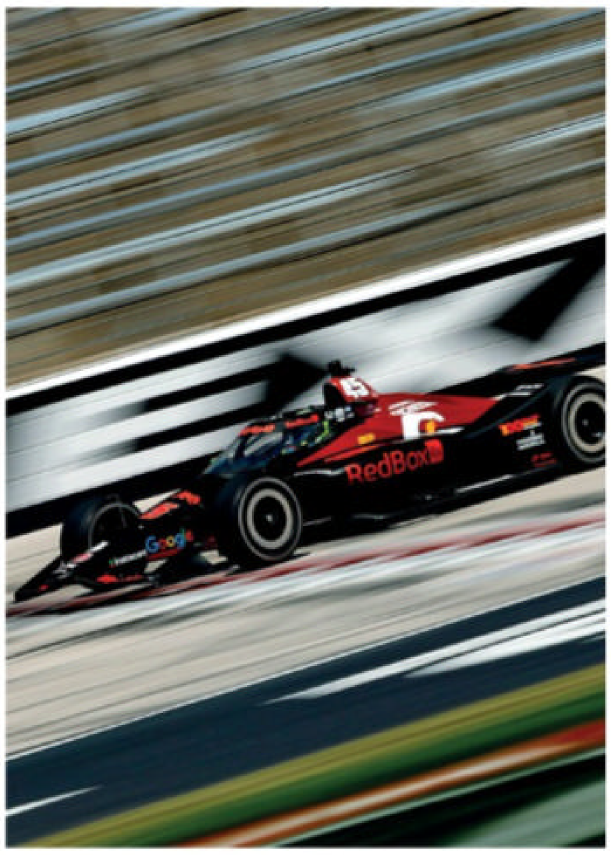
Reigning Indy Lights champion and 2018 BRDC British F3 title winner Linus Lundqvist completed his maiden IndyCar oval test at Texas Motor Speedway last week.

Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing stayed on at the track following the weekend's IndyCar race for some running on the Monday, allowing the 24-year-old Swede to rack up his first mileage in a top-level US open-wheeler since a run-out on the Indianapolis road course in 2021. He completed nearly 250 laps in the #45 Dallara-Honda normally raced by Christian Lundgaard.

"Linus did a lot of running and that's what it was all about, just giving him time in the car," said team boss Bobby Rahal. "We weren't necessarily looking for a top speed but we did find a lot of good things at the test that would have made us more competitive the prior day.

"Texas is one hell of a race track to get your first oval test in an IndyCar at and Linus didn't make any mistakes. He did a good job and I'm pleased for him. Our guys were pleased as well."

With the usual Lights scholarship prize fund for an IndyCar graduation absent this year, Lundqvist has not been able to make the step up so far. Could he compete in the Indy 500? His camp has indicated that 'further information about Linus Lundqvist's 2023 racing activities will be announced shortly'...



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HYUNDAI

Hyundai retains champions for World Tour

N.Michelisz
5
M. Azcona
96
DPPI/WTCR

TCR WORLD TOUR

The FIA's World Touring Car Cup may be no more, but the defunct series' big guns are wheeling out their heavy hitters for the new-for-2023 TCR World Tour, with 2022 champion Mikel Azcona and 2019 title winner Norbert Michelisz fighting the corner of Hyundai.

That was the news that came out of the South Korean manufacturer's European motorsport base in Alzenau, Germany earlier this week. Azcona and Michelisz will remain with the crack Italian BRC Squadra Corse to pilot the Hyundai Elantra N in the World Tour, for which the opening round is fast-approaching at the Algarve circuit on the last weekend of this month.

"The Customer Racing department have customers in many of the championships the new global series will visit, and the arrival of BRC Hyundai N Squadra Corse, Mikel Azcona and Norbert Michelisz will only increase the profile of Hyundai Motorsport teams in these nations," hailed the marque's motorsport chief Cyril Abiteboul.

Spaniard Azcona, who was unfortunate enough to win a global tin-top crown at what turned out to be a wake for his series, added: "Last year we proved that me, Norbert and the team worked very well together when we won both titles and I think we are only stronger at the start of this season."

The Hyundai news comes in the wake of the Cyan Racing Lynk & Co combination lining up a formidable attack. Two-time WTCR champion Yann Ehrlacher and 2017 World Touring Car king Thed Bjork will be joined by Santiago Urrutia and Ma Qing Hua. Hopefully World Tour tyre supplier Kumho won't find the Swedish-run squad kicking off about its rubber, after the WTCR fiasco with Goodyear last year…

Honda is understood to be adopting a lower-profile approach, but speculation suggests that WTCR runner-up Nestor Girolami will be part of the fray. Audi squad Comtoyou Racing has yet to reveal much detail, but the names of veterans Rob Huff and Tom Coronel are floating around.

MARCUS SIMMONS

Hamilton makes it six in Hard Cupra squad

BTCC

The British Touring Car Championship grid became all but complete last week when Nic Hamilton was named as the sixth driver for Team Hard's enormous line-up of Cupra Leons.

The Kent squad will in 2023 break a modern-day record for the number of cars run by a BTCC team. Hamilton joins three-time race winner Dan Lloyd, reigning Jack Sears Trophy champion Bobby Thompson, promising 2022 rookie Dexter Patterson, plus fellow regulars Jack Butel and Jade Edwards on board. Hard owns three BTCC TBL entrants' licences, but is making use of the TBL of its former driver Carl Boardley plus two from One Motorsport Honda-bound Aiden Moffat.

This will be the fourth season at Hard for the brother of seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, and his second using a bespoke brake servo system fitted to his car to help mitigate his disability.

"I am so grateful and blessed to be back on the BTCC grid with Team Hard," he said. "Continuity is everything and I feel right at home with the team."

The final BTCC seat was assigned on the eve of this week's launch of the series. New One Motorsport director Will Powell, who drove a Hard Cupra in 2022, will slot in alongside Moffat and Josh Cook.

MARCUS SIMMONS

DTM CLASSIC Regular readers will know we're partial to featuring classic tin-tops from the DTM support package in these pages. The latest is this Volvo 240 Turbo from PROsport Racing. The team has two examples of the model, which claimed 1985 honours in the European Touring Car Championship (with Gianfranco Brancatelli and Thomas Lindstrom) and the DTM (Per Stureson). None other than former DTM king Kurt Thiim will race one of them in the DTM Classic rounds at the Norisring and Lausitzring. The Dane is a former team-mate and long-time friend of PROsport team manager Christoph Esser, and was consultant to the squad when it was formed in 2006. **Photo by Eric Metzner**

UK ace Smith gets Audi for Portugal round

TCR WORLD TOUR

RIEROLA/WSC

TCR UK star turn Isaac Smith is to contest the joint opening round of the TCR World Tour and TCR Europe at the end of this month at the Algarve circuit.

Smith was narrowly pipped to the 2022 UK crown by Chris Smiley, despite driving an ageing weapon in the form of the Volkswagen Golf GTI. Now he has joined up with leading Spanish tin-top squad Volcano Motorsport. That team ran the promising Isidro Callejas to fourth in the European points last year with Cupra machinery, but has now switched allegiance and will field Smith in an Audi RS3 LMS Gen2.

The Yorkshireman got to grips with the car in a recent test at Barcelona – it was his first experience of the Spanish Grand Prix venue, the Audi, and the Kumho tyres on which the European and World series run.

"Last year in TCR UK showed that even in an older TCR car, the Volkswagen, I was capable of setting competitive times and scoring podiums across the season," said ex-Fiesta Junior champion Smith, who only lost the TCR UK title on dropped scores.

"Consistency kept me in the hunt, and I can use that knowledge again when I make my debut in TCR Europe at the end of this month. The best teams in TCR competition have already announced their entries in the Kumho TCR World Tour and by taking part in the opening round at Portimao, I can test myself against the best and show what I can do in the Volcano Motorsport Audi."

SCHUMACHER SWITCHES TO ENDURO SERIES

GTWCE

David Schumacher, the son of grand prix race winner Ralf, has switched to the GT World Challenge Europe for this season after failing to get on the scoreboard in the DTM last year.

The 21-year-old cousin of Mick and nephew of Michael remains with Mercedes squad Winward Racing for his move across to the Endurance Cup, where he will share a car with Miklas Born and Marius Zug in the Gold division. The sister car will also run for Gold points in the hands of Winward's own Russell Ward with Philip Ellis and Indy Dontje.

The Mercedes challenge on the overall GTWCE Endurance title is spearheaded again by the French ASP team, with reigning champion Raffaele Marciello joined by Jules Gounon and Timur Boguslavskiy in one car, and 2021 DTM king Maximilian Gotz lining up with Lorenzo Ferrari and Thomas Drouet in the sister Pro-class AMG GT3. The other Mercedes in the Pro class is the GetSpeed-run machine of Maro Engel, Fabian Schiller and Luca Stolz.

Australian ex-single-seater ace Alex Peroni has also joined the Mercedes roster, and will share one of GetSpeed's cars in the Bronze division. Another driver in the Bronze ranks is DTM racer Arjun Maini with Haupt Racing Team boss Hubert Haupt and Sebastien Baud.

Marciello and Boguslavskiy also once again lead the attack of Mercedes and ASP on the Sprint Cup. Briton Frank Bird shares with newly appointed AMG Junior driver, Australian Jordan Love, in the Silver sub-division with Haupt.

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Could Massa really take Hamilton's 2008 title?
AUTOSPORT
Secrets of Red Bull's F1 supremacy

LEVITT

Aitken joins Formula E rookie test with Envision

FORMULA E

One-time Williams Formula 1 grand prix starter-turned-sportscar ace Jack Aitken will sample Formula E machinery for the first time at the series' upcoming Rookie test in Germany later this month.

The 27-year-old (above) will join customer Jaguar team Envision Racing for the test, which will take place the day after the 22-23 April Berlin E-Prix double-header at the Tempelhof airport circuit.

British-South Korean Aitken, whose F1 start came at the 2020 Sakhir Grand Prix, won last month's Sebring 12 Hours in a Cadillac and will compete in the DTM this year at the wheel of an Emil Frey Racing Ferrari.

"I'm really excited to be Envision Racing's rookie driver," said Aitken. "It's a great opportunity for me to get behind the wheel of a Formula E car for the first time – the new Gen3 model looks like a lot of fun to drive. I can't wait for the opportunity to experience that for myself in Berlin and assist the team with their work as they keep building on what has already been a great start to the season."

Envision managing director and chief technical officer Sylvain Filippi added: "Jack has a wealth of talent and experience, and we are very excited that he will be getting his first taste of Formula E with our team. The test day will be hugely beneficial to him as a driver and for us to gather more crucial data for the season ahead."

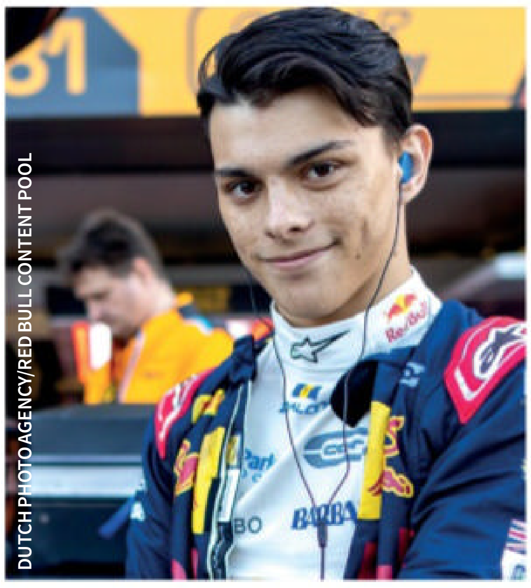
Four further drivers have been confirmed for the Rookie test – two each at Porsche and Andretti.

Porsche, which leads the drivers' and teams' championships, will run David Beckmann and Yifei Ye. The German is already a test and reserve driver for the marque, and previously performed the role with Andretti. Ye, who will race a Jota-run Porsche 963 in the World Endurance Championship, won the LMP2 class at last month's 1000 Miles of Sebring with Beckmann.

Team boss Florian Modlinger said: "As a team, we want to use this event to introduce young drivers to Formula E and see how they perform in a Formula E car."

Customer Porsche squad Andretti, meanwhile, will run Red Bull Junior Zane Maloney and reigning Indy Lights champion Linus Lundqvist. Maloney (below) is competing in F2 with Rodin Carlin, while Lundqvist is attempting to break into IndyCar (see p7).

STEFAN MACKLEY


DUTCH PHOTO AGENCY/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Hendrick in trouble again

NASCAR

NASCAR has once again penalised Hendrick Motorsports after finding violations with two of its cars.

William Byron's #24 and Alex Bowman's #48 Chevrolets were taken to the NASCAR R&D Center after the Richmond round on 2 April for what it called "further inspection". The team was found to have made illegal modifications to the greenhouse of both cars.

The Byron and Bowman cars have each been docked 60 driver and owner points, as well as five playoff points. Interim crew chiefs Brian Campe and Greg Ives were suspended for the next two races and each fined $75,000. Bowman's points penalty dropped him from the lead of the standings down to seventh, and he has fallen further to 11th after last weekend's Bristol round.

Hendrick finished 1-2 at Richmond, with Kyle Larson beating Josh Berry. Larson's #5 car passed post-race inspection without issue. But this is the second time in 2023 that NASCAR has found the organisation to be in violation of the rules.

On 15 March, NASCAR penalised all four Hendrick teams for the modification of single-source-supplied parts, specifically the hood louvres. Along with $100,000 fines and four-week crew chief suspensions for each car, they were all docked 100 driver and owner points and 10 playoff points. Although an appeals panel found the team guilty, they still rescinded all points penalties against them, finding the suspensions and monetary fines to be sufficient.

In response to the latest penalties, a Hendrick statement read: "We are reviewing the penalties issued by NASCAR and will determine next steps following Sunday's race at Bristol."

NICK DEGROOT

JARRETT

LEVITT motorsport IMAGES

Legge begins Indy 500 build-up

INDIANAPOLIS 500

US-based Briton Katherine Legge says there is much to learn ahead of her Indianapolis 500 comeback next month following her test with Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing at Texas Motor Speedway.

The 42-year-old, who last started an IndyCar race 10 years ago at the 500, has been entered in a fourth RLLR car at this year's 107th running of Indy alongside full-timers Graham Rahal, Christian Lundgaard and Jack Harvey.

Legge, who ran alongside Linus Lundqvist at the test (see p7), said: "For me personally, it was really good to get back in the car and shake off the cobwebs, gain confidence and learn all the procedural things like pitstops, buttons, to get back in during a low-pressure, low-stress environment...

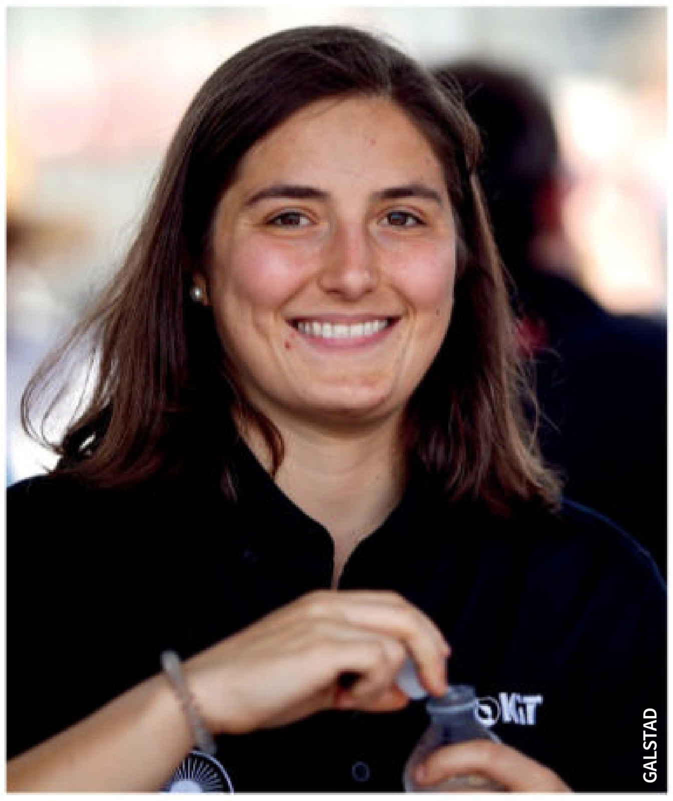
"My first thought when I left pitlane was 'Wow, I do not remember it being this fast!' I was in awe of how incredible it was and what a feeling it is. It did not hold though, as you get comfortable relatively quickly.

"I think the test went really well. I think the team are happy and that we made some strides forward with both myself and the car. Hopefully we can take some of that and it will translate at the Indy open test."

Legge's main programme this season is in the IMSA SportsCar Championship at the wheel of a Gradient Racing Acura.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

Calderon returns to LMP2 action


GALSTAD

EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES

Single-seater veteran Tatiana Calderon will return to endurance racing for the 2023 season, and has joined LMP2 squad Team Virage for the European Le Mans Series. The Silver-rated Colombian will partner Rob Hodes and Ian Rodriguez aboard Virage's Pro-Am ORECA 07.

Ex-Alfa Romeo Formula 1 development driver Calderon was forced to call time early on her 2022 IndyCar programme with AJ Foyt Racing due to funding issues. She then returned to Formula 2 to participate in the final four rounds of the season with the Charouz team.

Calderon raced in LMP2 with the Signatech-run Richard Mille Racing in the ELMS and then the World Endurance Championship in 2020-21. "I can't believe I'm finally back to racing," she said. "It has been a very difficult winter, because at times it seemed that no door was opening."

JAMIE KLEIN

IN THE HEADLINES

GOODYEAR'S WEC GT3 DEAL

Goodyear will be the exclusive tyre supplier for the new LMGT3 category to be introduced into the World Endurance Championship next season. The American-headquartered company has won the FIA tender to provide rubber for the division that replaces GTE in 2024.

NODA TO RACE IN EFO

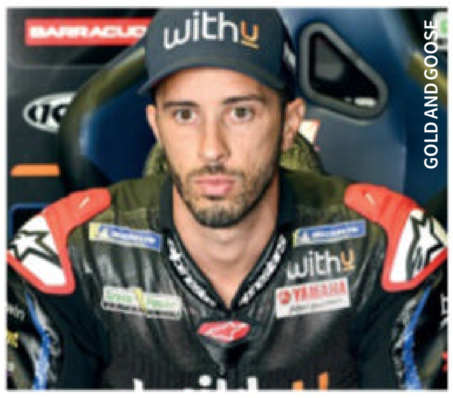
Former W Series racer Juju Noda will compete in Euroformula Open this season. The 17-year-old daughter of three-time grand prix starter Hideki Noda will campaign a Spiess-powered Dallara fielded by the family Noda Racing operation, based in Italy. She has already had one race outing in the car this year in the low-level Drexler Cup, scoring a win at Mugello.

NASCAR SUSPENDS WARE

NASCAR Cup Series driver Cody Ware has been indefinitely suspended by NASCAR after he was arrested and charged with assault. The 27-year-old missed last Sunday's NASCAR Cup race at Bristol, with a statement from his Rick Ware Racing squad saying it was "to focus on a personal matter". Ware was arrested on Monday and charged with felony assault by strangulation – inflict serious injury, as well as misdemeanour assault on a female. The three-time IndyCar race starter was replaced by triple Truck champion Matt Crafton at Bristol.

DOVIZIOSO'S DTM TRY-OUT

Former MotoGP star Andrea Dovizioso tested a BMW M4 GT3 for Project 1 last week to evaluate whether he is ready to race in the DTM this year. The Italian (below), who had a DTM guest outing in 2019 in a Class 1 Audi, got his first taste of GT3 machinery at Hockenheim on 28-29 March, sharing an M4 GT3 with two-time DTM champion and factory BMW driver Marco Wittmann. Dovizioso was four seconds off the pace of Wittmann, who is Project 1's only confirmed driver for 2023.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Why Ferrari is reluctant to change

Trying to catch up with Red Bull's runaway RB19 during this season is a big ask, even for the likes of Ferrari. But playing the long game also has its risks

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

In 2023, Ferrari has made its worst start to a Formula 1 season in terms of points scored after three rounds since 2009. That *could* change if Ferrari's request for a right of review into Carlos Sainz's late Australian Grand Prix penalty is deemed admissible and he gets back the 12 points lost in the five-second time addition handed down for punting Fernando Alonso around at the late restart. But that seems highly unlikely.

Ferrari team principal Fred Vasseur insists his team is "sticking to the plan" with its SF-23 challenger and that "we won't come with something completely different" through in-season upgrades. "[There won't be] a B-car if that is what you mean," Vasseur said, flat-out emphasising that Ferrari will not be taking the same approach as Mercedes and changing its car concept in 2023 in a bid to get back on terms with Red Bull.

But this stands at odds with what Sainz had been saying just a week earlier. "We realise now that Red Bull has a clear advantage everywhere and that we need to start looking to our right and to our left," the Spaniard replied in Melbourne when asked if there were any tracks where the SF-23 might come good against the crushingly commanding RB19. Monaco's narrow constraints apparently offer some hope...

Essentially, Ferrari has no hope of matching its early 2022 title rival without abandoning what makes the SF-23, and before it the F1-75, as good as it is. Yet Vasseur's other statements offer clues to his squad's longer-term plan to get back on terms with Red Bull.

> "To do a new project during the season, to do a new car with the cost cap... it's very difficult"

"To do a new project during the season, to start from scratch, to do a new car with the cost cap, but also considering the restriction of wind tunnel time – I don't want to say that it's impossible, but it's very difficult," Vasseur explained. "Also, on our side, we have the feeling, and I hope that we are right, that we are going in the right direction, that we have still tons of room for improvement on the car."

It's possible for Ferrari to have plenty of scope for gains on its current package yet still come up short against the RB19 even if they're implemented successfully. This, it seems, is the point Sainz was trying to make.

Vasseur says F1's current cost cap restrictions mean the much-vaunted successful B-spec switches of past eras are no longer viable. But really, there is some scope, as Aston Martin showed in 2022. It adopted its 'green Red Bull' concept switch for last year's Spanish GP and went from having one of the worst cars on the entire grid to leading the midfield at times by the campaign's conclusion. But Aston needed a full off-season to refine the downwash approach Red Bull had pioneered and leap to being its nearest rival on 2023 race results so far. It seems Ferrari has had a similar realisation.

And so, the central conclusion from Vasseur's message on Ferrari's long-term plan is that it is now waiting for the next off-season to relaunch its modern ground effect era. That a 'red Red Bull' might be lining up for the start of the 2024 campaign.

All of this could be a diversionary tactic from Vasseur – that the updates Ferrari is now seemingly rushing forward to introduce at Miami, Imola and Barcelona will fundamentally change the SF-23 under a guise of relaxed expectations. But his cost cap point is overriding, combined with the 2022 Aston and Mercedes lessons.

But waiting until 2024 for a major car concept reset comes with risks for Ferrari. Firstly, it would miss the data provided by extensive on-track running of altered floor and sidepod parts – valuable elements of Aston's stunning year-on-year rise. And it could also risk alienating one of Ferrari's consistently brilliant aspects of recent years: Charles Leclerc.

The Monegasque driver may be in the midst of his worst F1 season start since his rookie year with Sauber in 2018, but he has also provided Ferrari's only 2023 high points. Namely, running Red Bull close for pole in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia before poor reliability ruined his podium shots in both events. His Melbourne weekend was a shocker, but his race retirement clashing with Aston's Lance Stroll had more than a whiff of his 2020 mistakes in trying to overcome an unexpected car performance deficit.

Leclerc's Ferrari contract is up at the end of 2024. If the team is waiting until the start of that season to prove it can catch up to a Red Bull squad eyeing its own big gains, there's surely a chance he could be persuaded to race elsewhere by interested suitors. But waiting does at least buy Ferrari some time to prove to its star driver that it's capable of finally coming back to being F1's best.

Its task now is to overcome what some in the paddock estimate to be a 0.7-1-second Red Bull real race pace advantage with a likely 2024 car concept change. But if it's pinning all its hopes on doing that, Ferrari is right now set in a holding pattern of F1 frustration it just may never yet escape under the current design rules and their 2026 ending. Red Bull, after all, won't be standing still if Ferrari finally starts chasing it down its pioneering path.

P18 RED BULL SECRETS

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A hot start for Red Bull's next star

Helmut Marko's talent production line remains in rude health following Liam Lawson's stellar Super Formula debut last weekend

JAMIE KLEIN

At around 4pm Japanese time last Saturday, Liam Lawson's phone wouldn't stop vibrating. After his stunning debut Super Formula victory at Fuji, the messages of congratulation were flooding in. One of them was from none other than Red Bull junior scheme taskmaster Helmut Marko, who no doubt was keenly following his protege's progress from afar.

"Normally if we win a race, we get a message from Helmut," says Lawson. "That's obviously encouraging. I had a crazy amount of support; I was really surprised how many people saw the race. I was very appreciative of that."

Rookie winners in Super Formula have become relatively commonplace in recent seasons, but Lawson made a piece of Japanese motor racing history by vanquishing reigning two-time champion Tomoki Nojiri in the Fuji opener to stand atop the podium after his very first outing in the series.

According to records kept by current series promoter JRP, which only start when it took over the running of the series in 1996, what Lawson did was unprecedented. You have to go all the way back to 1978, when Marc Surer won in a one-off outing at Suzuka in what was then known as All-Japan Formula 2, to find the last such feat at this level of Japanese single-seater racing.

So how did the ice-cool Kiwi end up defying his own prediction that it would take him time to build up to the level where he could hope to challenge his team-mate Nojiri?

Firstly, Lawson has made the move to Japan with what now must be regarded as by far the strongest operation on the grid in Team Mugen, which demonstrated its incredible strength again in what was the first race weekend with the new Dallara SF23.

Secondly, the 45-minute qualifying session held on Saturday morning (after the cancellation of Friday practice due to bad weather) helped Lawson, allowing him to get within a couple of tenths of poleman Nojiri. But the 21-year-old found the usual knockout format on Sunday tougher, qualifying fourth and nearly half a second shy of Nojiri after he didn't quite nail his tyre warm-up.

Lawson made a clean start from third on Saturday to hold that position early on and, after a ballsy pass on Toshiki Oyu for second following an early safety car period, he was in a position to go on the attack against Nojiri as the pitstop phase approached. Both Mugen drivers left their stops until around half-distance amid tyre degradation fears but, contrary to the original plan, it was Lawson who came in first on lap 21 of 41, with Nojiri responding a lap later.

It was that out-lap that made all the difference – Lawson's was a full 2.5 seconds quicker than Nojiri's, with only around 0.4s of that gap being accounted for by a slightly brisker pitstop for the rookie. As Nojiri struggled to get his tyres heated up, Lawson swept around the outside at the long 100R right-hander, and pulled away before finally taking the chequered flag behind the safety car.

Nojiri managed to strike a blow back on behalf of the Super Formula establishment by winning the second race from pole, while Lawson ended up fifth, losing third place due to a 5s penalty for driving too slowly behind the safety car. But as Lawson himself noted post-race, whatever he did, he was going to lose out being the second Mugen driver in a queue of 20 cars all streaming into the pits at the same time under caution.

> **"Normally if we win a race, we get a message from Helmut. That's very encouraging"**

The upshot of the opening weekend is that Lawson is second in the standings, 14 points behind Nojiri, with seven races still to run. But by winning first time out, the New Zealander is already ahead of the game in the eyes of his engineer Tomo Koike.

"My original strategy was to focus more on Suzuka, because we have three races there and if we can win all of them, we can win the championship," says Koike. "By winning a race at Fuji, we are already ahead of what we planned."

If Lawson is really going to take the fight to Nojiri this year, qualifying is an area in which he will have to improve. Nojiri bagged six bonus points at Fuji for his two poles, versus just one for Lawson, and, while Fuji is a track where passing on the circuit is just about a viable strategy, that's a much tougher proposition at the other four venues on the schedule.

While Lawson's year may be off to a dream start, he has to keep up the pressure on his team-mate if he really wants to work his way into contention for a drive in Formula 1 with Red Bull's backing. Just as Pierre Gasly did back in 2017 when he demolished Mugen's top man at the time, Naoki Yamamoto.

Much will depend on the progress of AlphaTauri's incumbents Yuki Tsunoda and Nyck de Vries, but Marko will surely have been impressed that Lawson managed to win on his very first start in Japan, instead of taking until the halfway point of the season like Gasly did.

If Lawson can make a habit of beating Nojiri, then perhaps it won't be long until his phone is abuzz again with another message from Marko. Perhaps one with rather more exciting content than a simple note to say congratulations.

P43 SUPER FORMULA REPORT

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YOUR SAY

Why not make it free to enter to encourage more people to come and watch some fantastic racing while also supporting grassroots racers?

JAMES HARVEY

Would free entry bring the fans flocking?

It's about time UK circuits looked at how to entice more spectators into club racing weekends. With most now charging over £20 for entry per day, it's no wonder only a few dozen fans turn up. Why not make it free to enter to encourage more people to come and watch some fantastic racing while also supporting grassroots racers? They'd most likely easily make any (little) revenue back from lost ticket sales in increased canteen and coffee shop orders.

James Harvey
By email

Reaching for the dictionary...

So Autosport readers need to sharpen up their use of English? In the Saudi Arabia report (23 March) appears the word 'cromulent'. Intrigued (and not understanding), I looked it up in the Oxford English Dictionary (admittedly not a very new version), and it's *not* there! Internet searching reveals that its first use was in an episode of *The Simpsons* in the 1990s! So, thank you Autosport for continuing to improve your readers' grasp of their own language...

David Craigen (subscriber since 1963)
By email

That word is indeed credited to the long-running animated series. Turns out it was added to the OED back in 2018, and was the definitive record of the English language's Word of the Day on 10 November 2021 — ed

Smarten yourselves up a bit

It might be a trivial matter, but I find that male presenters, brilliant as they are, very often are not tastefully dressed, to say the least. All the ladies are beautifully and tastefully dressed.

I was watching Moto GP on Channel 4 and the presenters were very smart in a dark blue shirt and relevant logo on them.

Leo Voyazides
Switzerland

PICTURE OF THE WEEK(ISH)

In the run-up to the Australian Grand Prix, Daniel Ricciardo took a Red Bull RB7 on a 'road trip' across his homeland. Cue, spectacular photo op

MURRAY/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

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Red Bull standing out from the herd

The RB19 is undefeated this year in the hands of Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez, but it's not impossible that the others could catch up

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

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MARK THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Red Bull has pulled clear of the F1 pack in 2023

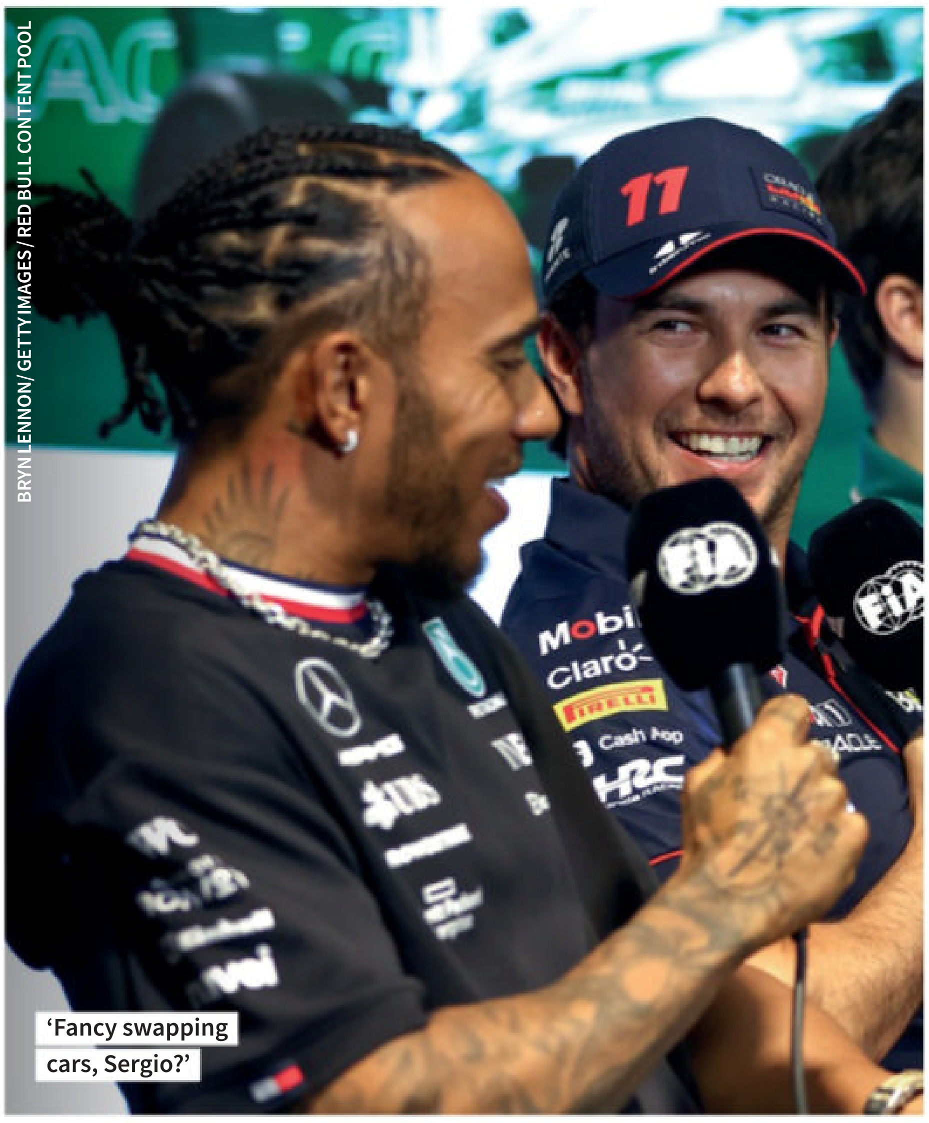
Those hoping for a modicum of convergence in the second year of Formula 1's new technical package, and a more competitive title battle after Red Bull grew in strength throughout 2022, will have been left slightly disappointed by 2023's opening races.

Relative to its early position as a thorn in Red Bull's side at the start of last year, Ferrari appears to have regressed. Mercedes appears slightly closer to the sharpest end of the F1 grid but has already lost faith in its W14, and it's been left to the upwardly mobile Aston Martin to offer the closest challenge to the 2022 title winners.

But there's still a gaping chasm between Red Bull and the rest. Max Verstappen looks to be on course for a third title in a row, although team-mate Sergio Perez still has designs on an admittedly unlikely bid for the crown. As early as the Bahrain season-opener, Mercedes' George Russell cut a rather defeated figure when considering the other teams' chances of victory this year, and it rather underlined the performance advantage with which the Milton Keynes squad kicked off the season. Wins in the first three races have been almost routine; 1-2 finishes in the opening two races were followed by Verstappen's first victory at Albert Park, where he had way too much pace for Mercedes' some-time leader Lewis Hamilton to contend with.

As much as people tend to abhor dominance, and one-dimensional title 'fights' are never particularly good for viewing figures, it is ultimately up to the other teams to close the gap. Red Bull has quite simply done the best job of anybody with its 2023 car, recognising the importance of simultaneously working on its weaknesses from last season while also attempting to improve the magnitude of the inherent strengths with which the RB18 came to play last year.

At the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, Hamilton said as much following his decision not to defend too hard from the recovering Verstappen, who was ascending from 15th on the grid after being hamstrung by a driveshaft issue in qualifying. The seven-time world champion reckoned that Mercedes' dominance of old paled in comparison to the advantage Red Bull has over the current field. "I've definitely never »



BRYN LENNON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

'Fancy swapping cars, Sergio?'

Max may relax, but Christian's cautious

MARK THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

seen a car so fast, especially compared to the rest," he mused in Jeddah. "I think when we were fast, we weren't that fast. I don't know how or why, but he came past me with some serious speed. I didn't even bother to block because it was just a massive speed difference."

Speaking ahead of the Australian GP, Red Bull team principal Christian Horner accepted Hamilton's compliment but, amid the predictions among the clairvoyancy dilettantes that Red Bull would execute a clean sweep of race wins, said there were too many races left to even consider that as a possibility. "Well, it's obviously very flattering, particularly considering some of the cars that Lewis has driven in recent history," Horner responded. "We've got a great car, the RB19 is a fantastic starting point for the season and to have achieved two 1-2 finishes in the first two races is more than we could have ever expected. But we're conscious it's a very long season. There's still 21 [before Australia] races to go and six sprint races. And we're conscious of big updates coming for others in the coming weeks as we head back to Europe. So there's still a lot to do and an awfully long way to go.

"We see that some teams have made a step forward, some haven't. But that's going to change from circuit to circuit, venue to venue. I've always said it's going to take three or four races to get a real pattern as to what is the actual formbook for the season."

And Horner's right. It remains unknown what the effect of its cost-cap punishment will truly be. The 10% reduction in aerodynamic testing was applied at the latter end of last year, and so wouldn't affect the design of the 2023 car quite so much given the core RB19 concept was already set in stone. But it could impact development. Horner has already spoken about the need for his aerodynamicists to use their wind tunnel and CFD testing capabilities efficiently to overcome the deficit, especially considering the cost-cap penalty comes on top of reductions under F1's 'sliding scale' system. For example, Red Bull has 37% less aerodynamic testing than Aston Martin until 30 June.

That means that, for each two-month aerodynamic testing period defined in the rules, Red Bull gets about 118 fewer wind tunnel runs, 29.6 fewer 'wind-on' hours (when the wind tunnel air speed is 15 m/s or beyond), 740 fewer discrete new geometries in CFD, and 148 fewer hours of wind tunnel occupancy time (wind speeds between 5 m/s and 15 m/s) than the Silverstone squad, which is now among its top chasers.

"It's how you use it," Horner stated. "We've got a limited amount of aero time, we're almost six months through since the penalty started. And of course, it's not just this year's car, it affects next year's as well. But one would assume up to the point it's reset at mid-season, Aston have got a lot of research time available to them. So again, it's how you use it and certainly within the confines of the budget cap as well."

It helps that Red Bull has an excellent platform to work from to mitigate some of the damage. While last year's RB18 developed into the best package of 2022 after kicking off the season slightly behind Ferrari, the new car boasts all the old machinery's greatest hits. Plus, crucially, it is no longer burdened by an overall weight problem.

When the RB18 was launched last year, it tipped the scales much heavier than some of its counterparts, and it required a concerted effort from the design team to take weight out. A side-effect of the heavier car was the neutral handling, which favoured Perez. But once the weight came down, the tendency to oversteer swung the pendulum towards Verstappen as the car aligned more closely to his combative style.

There was also the refinement of the sidepod concept before the dawn of last season, and the lack of porpoising in the RB18 as the other teams floundered suggested that the team had already sussed out the aerodynamic requirements of the car. Instead of compromising on weight, the team made sure it had its house in order with the aero package and then worked backwards in trimming out the fat.

The Red Bull was still outclassed in the early phases of the season by Ferrari, but the team's insiders knew of the car's potential. Verstappen, recounting his memories of last year's race in Australia, agreed that the overweight nature of the RB18 was causing problems, and that reliability was also a particularly egregious bugbear early on in 2022.

"Our car was very heavily overweight at this stage of the season [last year], so that didn't help," Verstappen recalls. "I think last year here we had a big shift in balance between qualifying and the race, so that caught us out in the race. And we were not reliable. That, of course, is never nice at the beginning of the year. But we also knew there was a lot of potential in that car, especially on the weight side. Last year was very frustrating [in Australia]: being slow in the race, retiring from the race. But I think we also understood quite quickly after the weekend what we did wrong with the set-up. We also had to work on our reliability: from then onwards it was quite all right in terms of reliability. We made big steps with the performance of the car."

The RB19 is effectively a continuation of last year's car, but improved in every facet to yield the current dominance it has displayed to date. For example, the Honda-developed power unit continues to be one of the best in the field, offering the team ample opportunity to make the most of its aerodynamic efficiency and chase straightline speed. This has been apparently enhanced by a particularly powerful drag reduction system, which has been of considerable use both in qualifying and in the recovery races Verstappen and Perez had to produce in Jeddah and Melbourne respectively.

> *"It's obviously very flattering, particularly considering some of the cars that Lewis has driven in recent history. But we're conscious it's a very long season"*

Sure, an efficient DRS is a nice embellishment to an already luxurious package, but it's a mere garnish sprinkled atop a particularly delectable machine. How the RB19 operates as an entity is far more important than the situational use of a rear-wing flap, and this is where it really shines. GPS traces generated throughout the opening 2023 rounds show that Red Bull's strongest suit is on straights and in high-speed corners. Comparing the fastest qualifying laps of Verstappen against Russell, Fernando Alonso and Carlos Sainz, the Red Bull does not excel in the slow-speed corners as much as Mercedes or Ferrari. The Aston Martin is strong on traction, but by the end of the straights the Red Bull is the car to have.

That extends to the high-speed corners, and the car is fantastic at »

MAUGER

When Verstappen doesn't win for Red Bull, Perez does

SUTTON

Red Bull battled with a weighty RB18 at the start of 2022

SUTTON

The RB19's DRS is another aspect giving it an edge

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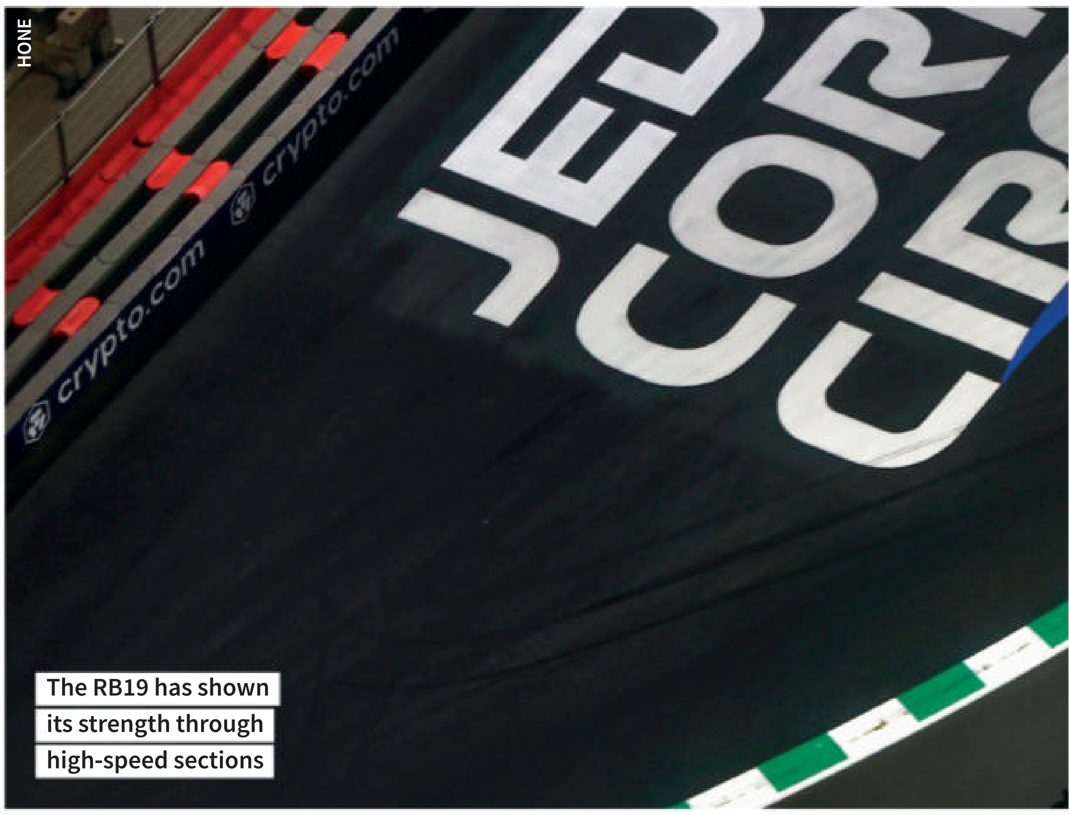


The RB19 has shown its strength through high-speed sections

building up downforce and carrying speed through the entirety of a corner. Although some cars are undoubtedly better in accelerating from corners, the RB19 refuses to buckle and clings on throughout, while some of the other machines may wash out. Consider Turn 3 at Barcelona, for example, as a medium-to-high-speed corner in modern F1. It would not be unlikely to see a Ferrari or Aston Martin light up the traces into the first phase of the corner, but the Red Bull will be the faster car in the latter stages of the turn.

Here, it's not just about having the best-designed underbody to build the load. It's also how the underbody is deployed when considering vehicle dynamics. And, if you're lucky enough to cast your eye over the RB19 from trackside, you notice how consistently the car retains a steady floor position despite the numerous forces acting upon it.

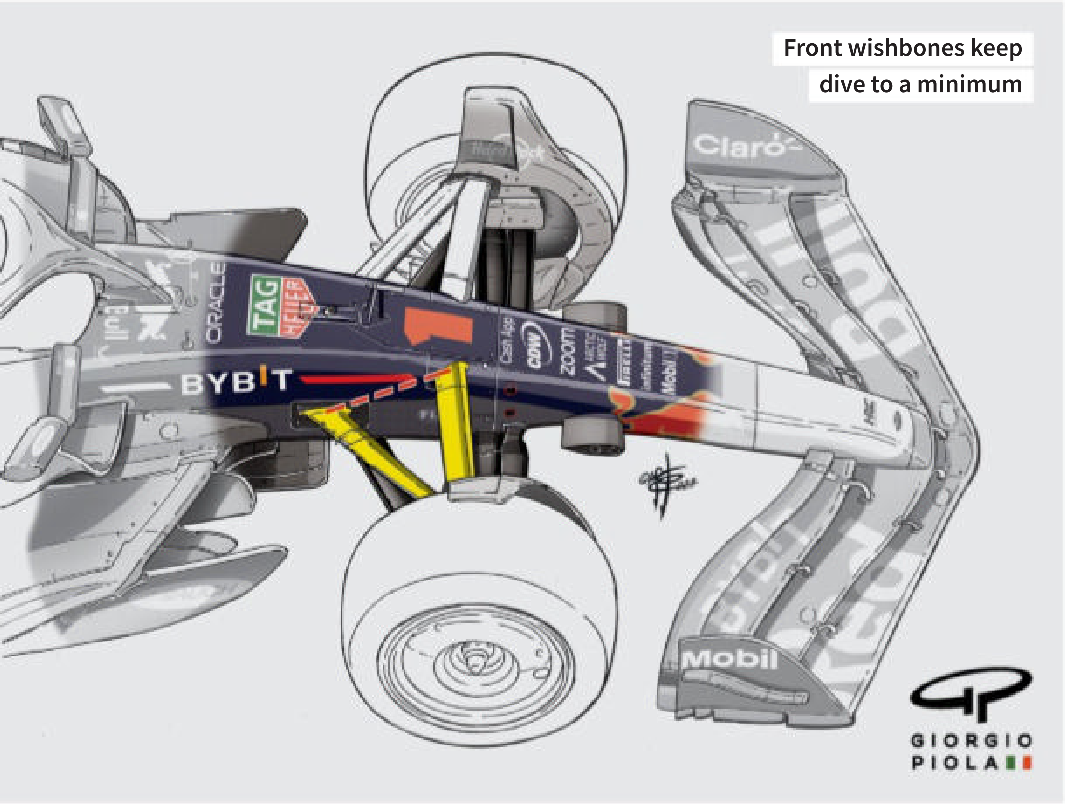
A quick physics lesson. All objects have six degrees of freedom to move in when untethered: the translation motions of surge (forward and backwards), sway (left and right) and heave (up and down), and the rotational motions of yaw (when an object is turning), pitch (when an object dips at the front and rear), and roll (when something rocks from side to side). These are all considerations when it comes to vehicle dynamics, and all influence the aerodynamic platform of an F1 car.

The venturi tunnels of a ground effect-style underbody work at their best when those rotational motions are mitigated, although yaw is naturally experienced when a car is cornering, so the floor has to be designed to work in those conditions. But if any rotational motion with a vertical component – in other words, pitch and roll – can be tuned out of the car, then there's a stable platform to build downforce.

The Red Bull lineage appears to do this better than any other car. Looking at the RB19 sweeping through the high-speed Turns 22 and 23 at Jeddah with very little rotational motion, you could surmise that the team's efforts to produce a suspension package that can maintain the floor in a relatively static position have been rather successful. Since ground effect aerodynamics were introduced to F1 in the late 1970s, the art of kinematics and vehicle dynamics had to catch up to ensure the cars were not unwieldy and wayward.

Lotus had one of the more novel solutions to chase that holy grail back in 1981, separating the chassis from the venturi tunnels and damping them differently to ensure that compromises on roll stiffness in the monocoque did not affect the downforce produced. Success was limited, but the dual-chassis concept was banned nonetheless.

Active suspension would be perfect for the job in modern F1, but that is not permitted either. Therefore, engineers must flex their creative muscles with passive solutions that do not infringe upon the tightly controlled regulations. In particular, the RB19's resistance to pitch appears of most intrigue around the paddock. When the car undergoes braking, the front end tends to dive owing to a rotational force around the centre of gravity under inertia. Under acceleration, that rotation


Front wishbones keep dive to a minimum

reverses and the rear squats down. While anti-dive and anti-squat properties are a largely ubiquitous development in suspension systems, these are most important when attempting to keep the underbody platform working with a consistent mass flow rate of air.

Suggestions are that the rear suspension springs confer a great deal of stiffness under both compression and tension, ensuring that they can mitigate squat when the rear loads under acceleration, and help limit the springs at the front from compressing on the brakes. But it seems that the inclination of the front suspension wishbones has been heavily developed to cut dive out under braking, ensuring there's no further disturbance to the underbody flow. From the position of the suspension members, it's possible, with a spot of quick maths, to work out the percentage of anti-dive if you know the brake bias and the centre of gravity. But Red Bull isn't going to hand those figures over!

With a consistent platform, the RB19 has been able to imbue both drivers with plenty of confidence that the car is not going to suddenly snap out of step in the faster corners. Equally, without spikes in loading on the tyres thanks to that stability, the car seems to be well-versed in preserving life in its Pirelli tyres. Not only can the Red Bull drivers push harder than many of the others thanks to the benign handling qualities of their car, but they can do so for longer. Sainz accused the Ferrari SF-23 of "eating" its tyres in the opening two races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, while the RB19 apparently has a far more restrained appetite. It's partly why the race pace of this year's car is even more impressive than its qualifying form. »

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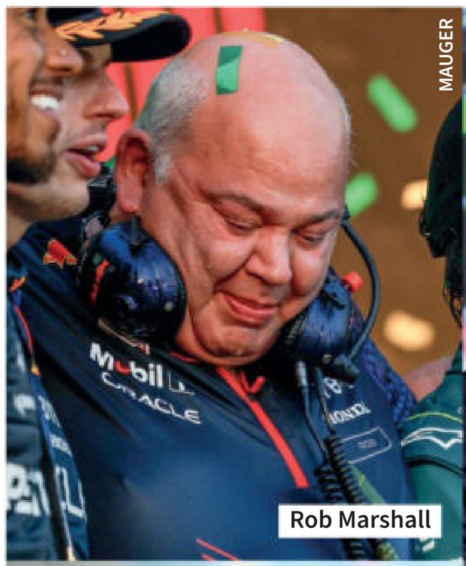
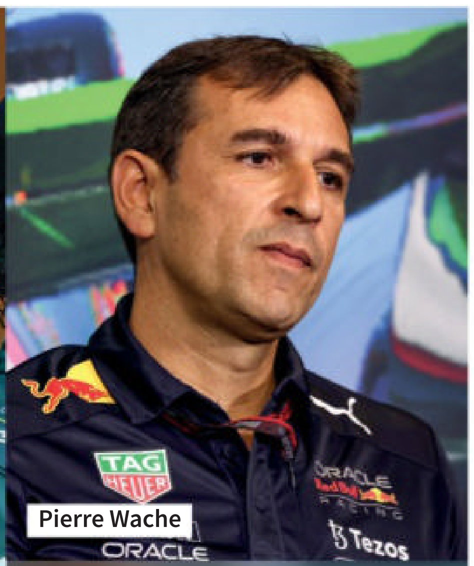

Rob Marshall

MAUGER


Pierre Wache

Ben Waterhouse

MARK THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Adrian Newey

SUTTON

Although the plaudits accrued through Red Bull's recent successes are commonly placed at Adrian Newey's doorstep, it does a disservice to the sterling work produced by the 1000-strong workforce at the team. Pierre Wache, Rob Marshall and Ben Waterhouse are top of the tree in the day-to-day technical operations, with hundreds of other engineers all worthy of praise.

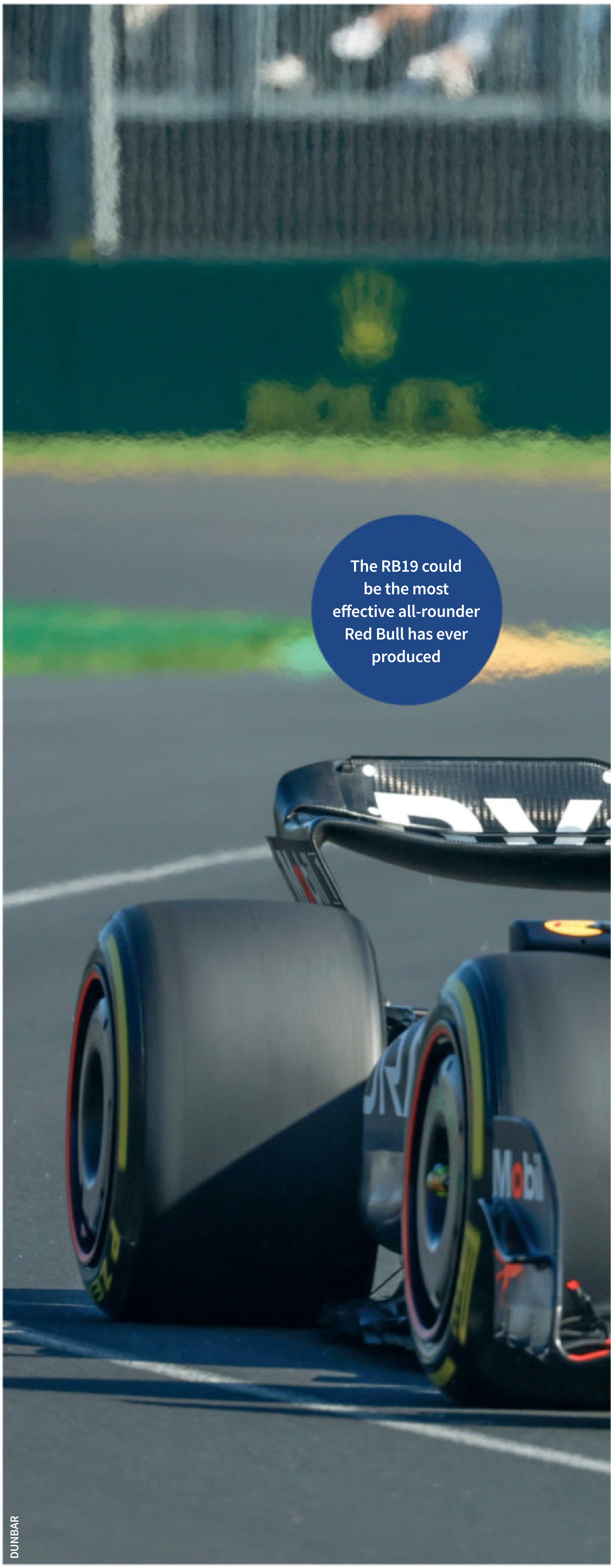
But that's not to say that Newey's wealth of experience can't be tapped into. After all, the design guru worked in F1 during the first cycle of ground effect cars, also penning GTP and Indycars to expand his repertoire during his early years behind the drawing board. So he was already acquainted with the pitfalls of a venturi-style underbody, helping the Red Bull team counter the porpoising effect straight out of the gate in 2022.

It's been suggested in the paddock that Newey has been able to keep his hand in, and his involvement in Red Bull's 2022 and 2023 cars had critically lain in the development of the suspension. Whether that's true or not, it would make sense for the Briton's past experiences to at least offer the more involved engineers some food for thought.

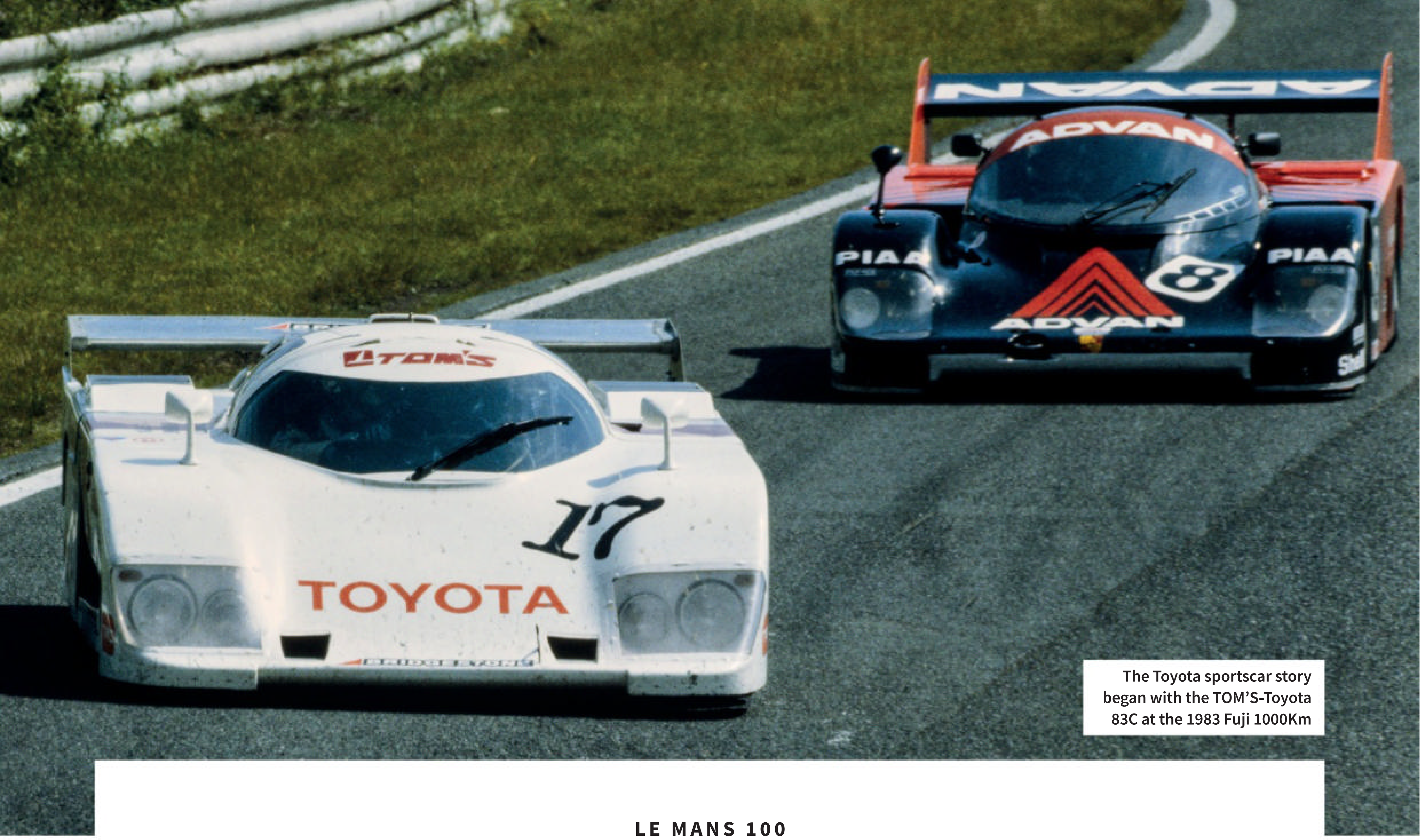
After three races and three wins, beating Red Bull in 2023 is going to be a monumental task for anyone to achieve. But the evidence is yet to present itself that the team will win every race, and a circuit like Monaco could very realistically derail an attempt at a clean sweep. Of course, Red Bull will have a package that will tack on some extra downforce in a bid to improve traction there, but it could realistically face stern threats from Mercedes and Aston Martin in the principality if they continue to impress in low-speed conditions.

It's far too early to be pessimistic that F1 won't get a proper title bout this year, since there are 20 races to go and plenty of development yet to come. But it's undeniable that Red Bull has the whip hand once again, and the team is brimming with confidence as its efforts for the new season have already reaped great rewards.

The RB19 might be the most complete car that the team has ever produced. It's devoid of any clear gaps in its armour, so far largely unhindered by unreliability and, when paired with the most complete driver on the grid in the form of Verstappen, it's truly a force of nature. It's fair to say that any other driver with championship aspirations would need to complete the most Herculean of feats to knock Red Bull even slightly off its perch.


The RB19 could be the most effective all-rounder Red Bull has ever produced

DUNBAR



The Toyota sportscar story began with the TOM'S-Toyota 83C at the 1983 Fuji 1000Km

LE MANS 100

THE LONG ROAD FOR TOYOTA'S STARLETS

The Japanese giant needed convincing about sportscar racing. Then, once it was in, it suffered appalling luck at Le Mans. But now it's a five-time 24 Hours winner

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

The word 'Toyota' written large across the nose of the two cars wasn't necessarily what it seemed. The presence of the Japanese manufacturer's name on two Group C machines at Fuji nearly 40 years ago didn't identify the design so much as offer a pointer to the future. It turned out to be a long and winding future, littered with false dawns and heartbreak. Eventually, though, the marque would find plentiful success at the greatest sportscar race of them all.

The Fuji 1000Km round of the World Endurance Championship in October 1983 was ground zero in the story of Toyota's bid for glory at the Le Mans 24 Hours. No one could have predicted that it would take 35 years for the marque to bag the biggest prize in sportscar racing, or that its maiden victory in 2018 would be the first of five in a row. It's a streak that Toyota will try to extend with its GR010 HYBRID in the centenary edition of the French enduro this June against Ferrari, Porsche *et al* in the Hypercar class. It's also a chance to validate those wins: victories one to five were scored in the face of limited opposition.

The Toyota-powered car that made its debut on the world stage at Fuji 1983 is correctly called a TOM'S-Toyota 83C. It was the start of an ultimately successful endeavour, initiated as the new Group C fuel formula was blooming into flower, to persuade the marque to go to Le Mans.

The 83C was the brainchild of two big players in the world of Japanese motorsport. Good friends Nobuhide Tachi and Minoru Hayashi, respective bosses of the TOM'S race team and constructor Dome, were, says the former, "pushing for the dream of Le Mans". They knew they had to prove themselves first before Toyota would commit to backing such a venture.

The duo's dream became a reality step by step. By 1985, the TOM'S/Dome project had made it to Le Mans with an evolution of their original Group C car. The two-car campaign at the Circuit de la Sarthe was still a privateer effort, though with increasing technical support from Toyota. The pair of 85Cs, one entered by TOM'S and one by Dome, didn't distinguish themselves in qualifying, although the former made it to the finish a distant 12th. Tachi calls it "the turning point for Toyota's Group C involvement".

Two years later, the name above the door at Le Mans was Toyota Team TOM'S. The TOM'S/Dome project was now officially backed by the factory. And by 1989 that allowed for a full campaign in what had become the World Sports-Prototype Championship, with a new carbon-composite design that had come on stream in 1988.

Toyota still didn't become a fixture at Le Mans. Not quite. There have been three distinct chapters to its story since, and that's not counting the two years in which the marque kept a foot in the door with modified Japanese GT series machinery. Each stanza in the narrative has its own tale – or tales – of disappointment. Toyota might have been a multiple Le Mans winner even before

LE MANS
100
YEARS

The first Toyota works car, pictured in 1987

SUTTON

1992 brought a second place at Le Mans, albeit a distant one

MURENBEELD

> *"As Pascal Vasselon once joked, 'we're good at finding new ways of losing victory at Le Mans'"*

the turn of the new millennium, and that number should have increased over the early years of the current programme that started with the TS030 HYBRID LMP1 on the rebirth of the WEC in 2012. It somehow contrived to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory more than once. As Pascal Vasselon, technical director of Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe, once joked, "we're good at finding new ways of losing victory at Le Mans".

The carbon car, from 1989 powered by a twin-turbo V8, never looked like a winner at Le Mans, or in the WSPC. But its successor, the TS010 built to the new 3.5-litre Group C formula, did win in the world championship and took a second place on its Le Mans debut in 1992, albeit six laps down on the winning Peugeot. Toyota stalwart Geoff Lees describes the TS010 as "the best-handling car I ever drove".

What that car lacked compared to the Peugeot were a few horsepower and a reliable gearbox. A beefed-up linkage introduced for Le Mans 1993 only exacerbated its transmission problems. All three of the TOM'S-run TS010s that year required a change of transmission as Peugeot swept to a 1-2-3.

The potential of the TS010 remained unfulfilled with the death of the world championship and then Group C. Yet Toyota almost prevailed at a hotchpotch of a Le Mans in 1994 with a machine that had its roots in the car introduced in 1988. The ageing fuel-formula design was reworked into the 94C-V to new post-Group C regulations and fielded as an LMP1/C90 car (C90 referred to the generation of old-rules cars accepted). Two were entered, one by SARD and one by Trust. And so to the first of Toyota's near-misses.

The SARD entry shared by Jeff Krosnoff, Mauro Martini and Eddie Irvine came within 90 minutes of success. The car had been established in the lead for nine hours when Krosnoff ground to a halt in neutral on the start/finish straight. He jumped from the cockpit, ran to the back of the car, fiddled with the gear linkage and somehow engaged a cog. Any chance of victory disappeared with the stop for permanent repairs that followed, though Irvine fought back to split the Dauer 962LM Porsches and take second.

Toyota would get closer still to victory in the first year of its next concerted push to fulfil the Le Mans dream. The plunge proper was made into the burgeoning GT1 class for 1998 after Toyota had tested the waters with the car known as the Supra GT-LM in 1995-96. It was an all guns blazing, big money attempt to win Le Mans – and Le Mans only. »

TOYOTA AT LE MANS

Victories
5

4
1-2 finishes

Years on the podium
11

Factory debut
1987

19
Full-factory campaigns

The project masterminded from the same Cologne facility that Toyota Gazoo Racing calls home today started on 1 January 1997. The result was the Toyota GT-One, a car that was up and running by the end of December under its initial TS020 codename. Just six months later, it came within 80 minutes of Le Mans victory.

Transmission failure resulted in the late retirement of the car shared by Lees, Thierry Boutsen and Ralf Kelleners. The cause was a lack of oil in the ’box after two changes of the internals. The likelihood is – and there are alternative though not entirely contradictory explanations – that the sump plug on the casing wasn’t replaced at the second stop.

Twelve months later, Toyota lost victory twice over, through no fault of its own. The GT-One had an edge in a battle with BMW and its V12 LMR. Boutsen, Kelleners and Allan McNish were fighting with the German car driven by Tom Kristensen, JJ Lehto and Jorg Muller when Boutsen was punted from behind under braking for the Dunlop Chicane by a GT2-class Porsche in the night. “We would have won in a straight fight, but I’m sure that Tom would say they would have done the same,” says McNish. “We’ve argued over that one plenty of times.”

With the lead Bimmer out at midday, there was a new Toyota vs BMW battle as the race climaxed. The remaining GT-One shared by Ukyo Katayama, Toshio Suzuki and Keiichi Tsuchiya looked on course to prevail in a battle with the V12 LMR driven by Yannick Dalmas, Pierluigi Martini and Jo Winkelhock. But an incident with an older privateer BMW that put Katayama up on the kerbs on the entry to the first Mulsanne chicane did for Toyota’s chances early in the final hour.

The GT-One led into Toyota’s Formula 1 entry in 2002; the sportscar was even used to test components and systems for its first F1 car. Then Le Mans came back into focus after the withdrawal from F1. Work on what became the TS030 HYBRID had started even before an entry into the reborn WEC was signed off in Japan.

The TS030 was a WEC race winner in year one of the programme and its successor, the TS040 still powered by a normally aspirated V8, took the drivers’ title with Sebastien Buemi and Anthony Davidson in 2014 and the manufacturers’ title to boot in a season where it won five of the eight races. But Le Mans wasn’t one of them… The Toyota shared by Alex Wurz, Stephane Sarrazin and Kazuki Nakajima held a slim but stable advantage in the night when it encountered a problem with an FIA sensor. Nakajima was on his way to the pits to have it replaced, a job that would have taken seconds rather than minutes, when the rogue part’s loom burnt out and stranded him out on track.

That was nothing compared with the heartbreak of 2016, the first season of the TS050 powered by a new 2.4-litre turbo engine.

> *“In 2018, we would have won against any of the opposition we’d had in the past. This achievement has value”*

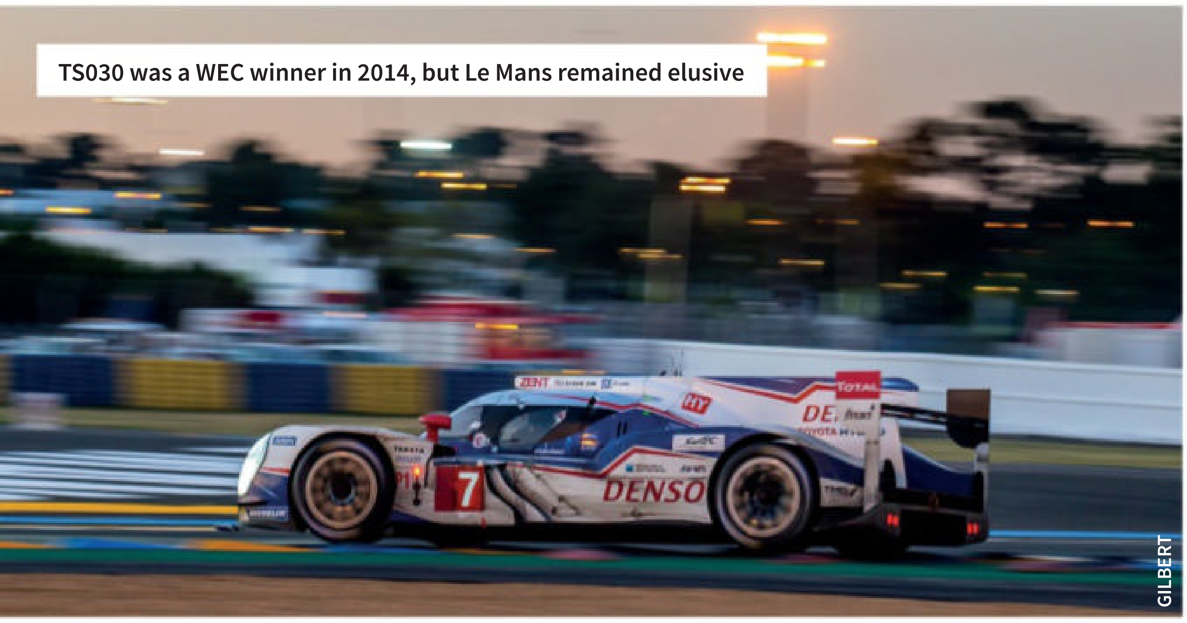
Buemi, Davidson and Nakajima were just six *minutes* from victory after prevailing in a thrilling fight with the best of the Porsche 919 Hybrids. Nakajima was a minute up the road when he lost power on his penultimate lap. An air line between a turbo and intercooler fractured, a problem that 12 months later wouldn’t have cost the car victory: some of the systems needed to overcome such an issue weren’t yet in place on the hurriedly developed V6.

If Toyota’s 2016 failure might be described as frustrating, senseless would be the correct description of what happened a year later. The car Kamui Kobayashi shared with Sarrazin and Mike Conway was in the lead battle when he ran a red light at the end of the pitlane. He’d been waved through by an orange-suited figure who turned out to be another driver rather than a marshal. In the confusion, the Japanese driver stopped and tried to get going using the conventional clutch rather than on electrical power as per a

»

Toyota came within 90 minutes of victory in 1994

Both GT-Ones were in the hunt in 1999



TS030 was a WEC winner in 2014, but Le Mans remained elusive

GILBERT

2016 was the bitterest of heartbreaks

GILBERT

A big name helped break the duck in 2018…

JEP

…and by 2022 Toyota was celebrating five straight wins

JEP

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YOU MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT… Toyota wasn't scheduled to return to the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2012 with its new TS030. It was planning a development year with a handful of WEC appearances, before bringing forward its programme after Peugeot axed its own. Le Mans turned out to be the car's maiden appearance after the planned debut at Spa was set back following an accident in testing. **Photograph by 2012 MacLean Photographic**

normal pitstop. It wasn't designed for the job, and Kobayashi wouldn't complete the lap.

The long-awaited victory at Le Mans for Toyota finally came in 2018, in the first of two editions of the 24 Hours on the 2018-19 WEC schedule. The so-called superseason was a reaction to the end of Porsche's LMP1 programme the previous year, which had followed Audi's departure one year earlier. Toyota was now racing alone as the only manufacturer in LMP1 – its opposition came from garagistes only – but it put on a show in a closely fought and flat-out race. No quarter was given in the battle between the winning TS050 shared by Fernando Alonso, Buemi and Nakajima, and that of team-mates Kobayashi, Conway and Jose Maria Lopez.

The Japanese manufacturer has continued to rack up the victories against limited opposition in the years since Alonso inevitably stole the headlines from Toyota on the occasion of its maiden victory. The Spaniard made it two wins from two starts the following year thanks to another bizarre incident that could seemingly only afflict a Toyota. Kobayashi, Conway and Lopez should have buried their Le Mans hoodoo, and had more than enough in hand over the sister car to complete a pitstop to replace a holed Michelin as the top of the 23rd hour approached. The problem was that the team changed the wrong wheel because the system of tyre pressure monitors had been incorrectly wired. The slow lap that followed for Lopez before he had to stop again handed the win to the sister car.

Kobayashi, Conway and Lopez finally broke their jinx in 2021, the first year of the Le Mans Hypercar category, though there was a problem unseen by the outside world that threatened to derail both their victory bid and Toyota's attempt to give its new GR010 HYBRID a debut win. The fuel bladders on the two cars were collapsing due to insufficient breathing, and the polyurethane particles released as a result were combining with grease from the refuelling nozzle to block the filter. Toyota only secured another 1-2 victory ahead of the solo Alpine, a low-key manufacturer entry with an old 'grandfathered' LMP1 car, courtesy of a series of ingenious fixes thought up on the hoof.

"Some people think we had it easy. A victory this year means there can be no discussion"

That's among the reasons why Toyota doesn't like the suggestion that it's had it easy over the past five years. For a start, Vasselon is sure that the TS050s wouldn't have been beaten in 2018 had Porsche continued its 919 Hybrid programme. "Our pace in 2018 and having a race without any issues would have meant that we would have won against any of the opposition we'd had in the past," he says. "This kind of achievement has a value, an absolute value."

He also suggests that the level of risk-taking by the drivers is higher when two crews from the same team are fighting: "The driver can't say he is battling with a faster car; there are no excuses. If Porsche or Ferrari had been present, our drivers wouldn't have been taking more risks. Absolutely not."

Vasselon concedes that the image of Toyota's five wins on the trot in the wider world is different to his own. "What we have achieved hasn't been easy," he argues, "but if you race against Porsche, Ferrari, Cadillac and Peugeot and get it right, the achievement will have another magnitude in terms of how it is perceived. We understand that what happens in the coming months and years will count more than the recent past."

That's why Buemi is so keen to add to his tally of four Le Mans victories come the second weekend of June this year. "We know how good we have been and how difficult those victories were, even if some people think we had it easy," says the Swiss. "I know how hard I've had to fight for the victories – I gave it everything each time. A victory this year means there can be no discussion."

BIDDING FAREWELL TO A MOTORSPORT KINGDOM

Greg Murphy was rightly proclaimed as the Australian Supercars scene's King of Pukekohe. Now that the New Zealand track has closed, the Kiwi talks about what made it so special

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

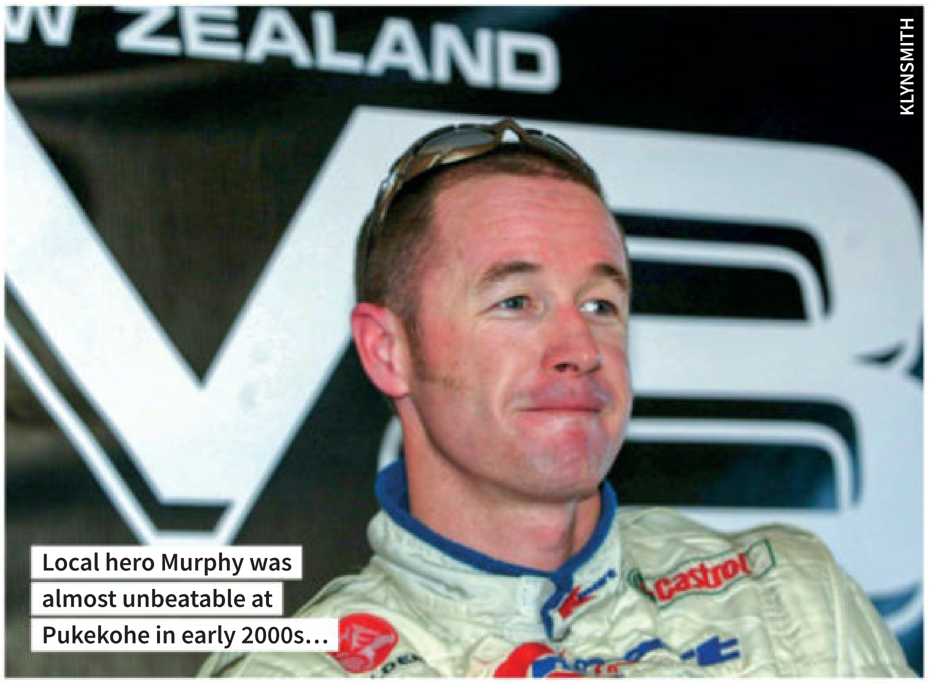
September 2022. Fabled New Zealand race track Pukekohe was hosting Australia's Supercars series not only for the first time since 2019, due to COVID, but also for the last time ever, thanks to the impending, and somewhat unexpected, closure of the circuit.

Less than eight weeks earlier, venue owner Auckland Thoroughbred Racing had announced an expansion of the horse training and racing facilities at Pukekohe Park. The flip side was that it would come at the expense of the motor racing track. This month, a rich, six-decade chapter of motorsport history officially came to an end.

For that entire final Supercars weekend there was magic in the air. The sell-out crowd was bouncing. Merchandise trucks were basically out of stock by Friday evening. And Shane van Gisbergen put in one of the all-time great Supercars drives to win Sunday afternoon's finale. The hometown hero, who grew up just around the corner, charged from eighth on the grid to steal the win in the closing laps after a thrilling battle with Cam Waters. The roar from the crowd was incredible as he executed the winning pass, as it was when he lifted the Jason Richards Trophy, a nod to the late, great 'JR', who passed away due to illness in 2011. It's one of the most treasured prizes in Supercars, thanks to how universally popular JR was with everyone in the paddock, including his rival drivers. Orchestrating the emotional victory was van Gisbergen's new engineer Andrew Edwards, a great friend of Richards from their time together at Brad Jones Racing.

It was the most fitting of ends to an era.

Watching in amazement as it all unfolded was two-time series runner-up Greg Murphy, the undisputed King of Pukekohe (even if he struggles to admit it himself). Supercars TV pit reporter Chad Neylon would later post footage on social media of a deeply invested Murphy reacting to the race-winning pass.



KLYNSMITH

Local hero Murphy was almost unbeatable at Pukekohe in early 2000s...

"I suppose it was one of those things that you can dream of happening. But the chance of it happening? Nah, just ridiculous," says four-time Bathurst 1000 winner Murphy of that final race in 2022. "Then again, I've been incredibly fortunate to have had a few of those storylines there in the past myself. So I probably shouldn't be surprised. But seriously, that was just a crazy, crazy situation. I'm not a believer in the universe stuff, but it was like... JR was up there pulling strings, man.

"I spoke to Andrew Edwards later on, when they were packing up in the dark on Sunday night, and he couldn't believe it. He was so emotional about the whole thing. It was amazing, it was incredible to see someone who had so many touch points to the journey, to

HORSBURGH

Last Supercars visit came in 2022, with van Gisbergen (left) winning Jason Richards trophy

HORSBURGH

…and scored nine race wins at the Kiwi track over a five-year period in Holden machines

have it culminate in that afternoon. His story is even more remarkable and wonderful than anybody else's.

"There was something spooky going on. It sends a shiver down the spine just talking about it. I'm not a believer in all that stuff, but man, sometimes things are just supposed to be."

It was the final moment of magic at Pukekohe, but it was far from the first. The racing gods have long smiled down on the place, and the greatest beneficiary of that was Murphy.

Of course the circuit's history is so much more than Supercars. After opening in 1963 it became a staple of the Tasman Series, which meant hosting some of the best single-seater drivers in the world. It was also a regular host of the New Zealand Grand Prix, with John Surtees, Bruce McLaren, Graham Hill, Jackie Stewart, Chris Amon and Keke Rosberg among those to have won NZGP crowns at the venue.

But there can only be one king, and that is Murphy. One of, if not the, most popular Kiwi drivers of all time, Murphy was an unstoppable »

> **"I'M NOT A BELIEVER IN THE UNIVERSE STUFF, BUT IT WAS LIKE JR WAS UP THERE PULLING STRINGS, MAN."**

Blast-off for 1969 NZGP, with Amon (Ferrari) and Rindt (Lotus) on front row

Murphy absolutely on it on way Pukekohe victory in 2001

KLYNSMITH

HORSBURGH

force in the early days of championship Supercars racing at Pukekohe. In 2001 he won the first ever points paying round there with a clean sweep of all three races. A year later he won the round again. And again in 2003. It wasn't until 2004 that he was finally beaten to a round win on NZ soil, when Jason Bright triumphed. He then bounced back in 2005 with another clean sweep to reclaim his crown.

Of course, the remarkable run of success meant people pinned 'Murph' as a Pukekohe specialist who must clearly have grown up at the place. The reality, however, is that he'd only raced on the fast, daunting layout a handful of times before 2001.

"I think the first time I raced there was as a support to the 1990 Nissan Mobil series, which was mindblowing," Murphy recalls. "I was in Formula Ford; I won the Shell Ultra Scholarship which got me into cars. We did Wellington and then Pukekohe was added to the schedule late. It wasn't in the original budget.

"I was terrified the first time. The warnings I had from people — 'You'll have to be bloody careful, it's a bloody serious race track' — so I turned up there and I was shitting myself. I'd been told all these things about what you needed to look out for, and that it's dangerous here and you need a lot of commitment there and have to show respect here and so on. I was ill-prepared, really, given it was my second race in a car and I'd never been there before.

"We went back there once or twice after that, during the season, and I got quite used to it. I think I had a couple of good results there in 1991. And then we rolled into the 1991/1992 season and I was in a Formula Atlantic car. Man, it was mega in an Atlantic car. Absolutely mega. And then at the end of 1992 I was back there in the Sierra. I think when I got there in the Sierra I'd only driven there four or five times. Five max."

The Sierra Murphy is talking about is the Whittakers Peanut Slab Group A Ford that he and Kane Scott shared for the Nissan Mobil 500 series in December 1992. The pair finished fourth in Wellington and fourth at Pukekohe. They were important results for Murphy that helped him break into the Australian Touring Car Championship scene.

Fast-forward to late 1996, by which time Murphy had won the 1994 NZGP, run in that era for Formula Brabham (Holden) cars, at Pukekohe. He had just taken a sensational Bathurst 1000 win with Craig Lowndes for the Holden Racing Team. He was then added to HRT's squad for the revived Mobil New Zealand series, a pair of non-championship sprint events at Pukekohe and Wellington. Murphy won the series thanks to a clean sweep at Pukekohe in front of a huge crowd.

"When we came over in 1996 the crowd was huge, because people were starved of [Aussie touring cars] and just loved it," says Murphy. "So over we came and the crowd was phenomenal. But I was just… bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. I was a deer in the headlights. Bathurst had happened and I was making a name for myself, but it was all a blur."

The next time the ATCC/Supercars raced in New Zealand was that first proper championship round in 2001 — the start of Murphy's four-from-five winning streak. For much of that period Murphy was with the highly competitive K-Mart Racing Team, his Pukekohe results all part of top-four championship campaigns. His 2005 win, however, was a little less expected given he'd moved to the less-consistent Paul Weel Racing. Either way, given the general competitive nature of the series, Murphy is at a loss to explain how and why he was so hard to beat at the circuit each year.

"I was always turned up there for the first five years — because it did end eventually — but for those years I was in good machinery that I was comfortable would work there," says Murphy. "We couldn't make it work everywhere but it would work there and that gave me confidence. And hey, a few things went our way through those five years, for sure, where others had misfortune and that put me in a good position, because I wasn't always the fastest. But again, why? Why did those

Nickname clearly originates from sixth fan going missing during skin-daubing session

HORSBURGH

HOLDEN
Murphy
51
SUPER CHEAP AUTO
Castrol
FORD
888
Lowndes
Betta ELECTRICAL
FALCON
LG

Final furlongs? Leading Lowndes past the horse-racing fences in 2005

things happen to allow me to have that success? It's bizarre. I was surprised it kept happening over those years."

As great as the highs were for Murphy, the success came at a price. With each win the pressure multiplied the following year. In the lead-up to Pukekohe there would be a barrage of questions about whether he could be beaten. As Murphy explains, it was a similar grind to his long-standing Bathurst lap record from 2003.

"Yeah, absolutely," he says when asked if he felt the pressure to perform on home soil. "Probably not so much the first time as much as the second time, and third time, and fourth time. Year after year. It's a bit like when I was hounded by people saying, 'Is your Lap of the Gods [Bathurst] going to be beaten this year?' Eventually it's like, 'For God's sake, please someone just beat it'. Three years into Pukekohe it was like, 'Can he be beaten?' And then Jason went and did it in 2004 and it was almost like a bit of a relief, in a way. And I was still on the podium so it was OK, it was still amazing. As long as you're part of something where there's some success and you're still being seen, rather than being 23rd, you're pretty happy."

HOLDEN
51
NOBLE GROUP
AUTO

A rare moment of misfortune in 2006

HORSBURGH

"IT WAS AN ICONIC CIRCUIT. OTHER TRACKS HAD A BIT OF THAT MAGIC TOO, BUT PUKEKOHE JUST STANDS OUT"

Understandably, Murphy is reluctant to personally overplay his place, and that of his winning streak, in Pukekohe history. But even at his most modest, he can't hide what being the King of Pukekohe means to him.

"I think it was already an iconic circuit," he says. "You think about the generations of fans, and passing the baton from people who were there in the 1960s and through that era. You look at the crowds of people who turned up there to watch those incredible men and their machines, and the Kiwi names at the time that were starting out. And then the Brabhams and Hills and the Clarks, all these people. The Kenny Smiths of the world.

"That started it. There are other tracks like Levin, which isn't around anymore, or South Island tracks like Wigram and Teretonga. They had a bit of that magic too. But Pukekohe just stands out. And it's continued to create stories.

"So yes, I guess I've been part of that by generating moments that people remember. Moments that sit with them forever. I totally recognise that and how fortunate I've been to be part of that. And now Shane is part of that. And Andre [Heimgartner] is part of that. And [three-time Supercars champion] Scott McLaughlin too.

"We're not just talking about those things to make chat. They are cemented within us, and so many other people out there as well. That's an honour."

Spectacular GT machinery will be among the many highlights at Goodwood

PREVIEW

10 KEY FEATURES OF THE GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING

There is so much to see and enjoy at this weekend's 80th Goodwood Members' Meeting. Here's our guide to some of the likely highlights

PAUL LAWRENCE

PHOTOGRAPHY **JAYSON FONG, GARY HAWKINS AND** motorsport IMAGES

1 Lotus Cortina at 60

A field of 30 Lotus Cortinas in the hands of a raft of stars will surely be a memorable highlight of the 80th Members' Meeting. To mark the 60th anniversary of the competition debut of the Ford Lotus Cortina Mk1, Goodwood has pulled together another of its ultimate one-make races.

One of the iconic racing images from the mid-1960s is Jim Clark three-wheeling a Cortina on his way to winning the British Saloon Car Championship. He was also the only driver to take outright BSCC victories in the tin-top, so it is appropriate that Sunday's 45-minute two-driver encounter will be run for the Jim Clark Trophy.

The capacity field is packed with quality drivers and this is going to be a ferocious contest. There will likely be panel-beating and door-handle action in pursuit of some serious bragging rights.

Each car is shared between an owner and a pro or semi-pro driver and the field includes Le Mans winners, former Formula 1 racers and touring car stars old and new. Stand-out pairings include Guy Smith/Ben Clucas, David Dickenson/Andrew Jordan and Matt Neal/Gordon Shedden, while other notable names include Tom Kristensen, Dario Franchitti, Karun Chandhok and David Brabham.

GARY HAWKINS

CIRLING
NI GTP
Mobil
1

JAYSON FONG

2 Riccardo Patrese in a Brabham BT52

Forty years ago, Riccardo Patrese raced a Brabham BT52. This weekend, the celebration of a Goodwood folklore story will put the Italian back in this sublime Formula 1 design.

In 1983, Goodwood had been closed to racing for 17 years but continued to be regularly used as a testing venue. At one such test session, the Brabham F1 team was trialling its BT52 when Nelson Piquet lapped the Sussex circuit in under a minute. At least, that's how the story goes. Though unconfirmed, it seems highly plausible.

The requirement for all F1 cars to have flat bottoms for the 1983 season prompted the rapid development of the BT52, a Gordon Murray design. It was a huge success and Piquet won the second of three world titles – the fourth and final crown for a Brabham driver.

To mark 40 years since what may well have been the greatest lap of Goodwood, two BT52s will be on hand for five-lap demonstration runs each day. To make it even more special, Patrese and Pedro Piquet (Nelson's son) will do the driving!

parmalat
5
FILA
MICHELIN

HAWKINS

J BLOXHAM

3 'Moby Dick' to headline Porsche 75th anniversary demonstrations

Just as Goodwood celebrates its 75th anniversary this season, so too does Porsche, which delivered its first 356 sportscar in 1948.

To mark that shared birthday, one of the demonstrations at the 80th Members' Meeting will celebrate the Porsche 911, which remains the most enduring, loved and raced model from the German manufacturer's history. The demonstrations will feature one of the biggest and most varied gatherings of racing 911s, ranging from 1973 through to 1998.

Two stand-out cars will be the 1973 Targa Florio-winning Carrera RSR and the 1998 Le Mans-winning 911 GT1. Record Le Mans winner Tom Kristensen will drive the 1973 car, while also on track will be an example of the 935 'Moby Dick', the extreme version of the successful 935, named after the whale due to its extended rear bodywork. This car was clocked at 230mph on the Mulsanne Straight and is one of five genuine 935s on track this weekend.

The two Porsche demonstration sessions, featuring around 20 cars, will run at 1240 on Saturday and 1435 on Sunday.

4 Star cars and drivers set for GT1 revisited demo

Take around 25 sensational GT1 cars from the early 2000s, add in some very talented drivers and let them loose as the sun sets over Sussex. It should make for another epic Goodwood memory.

The GT1 cars of around two decades ago were impressive beasts. That era will be revisited in two high-speed demonstration sessions, the first of which will run at 1930 on Saturday after a spectator grid walk offers the chance to get up close to these evocative cars. The 15-minute demo session will then be repeated at 1050 on Sunday.

Aston Martin, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Lister, Marcos, Maserati and Saleen will all be represented in what will be a sensational mix of sight and sound.

Period-appropriate, world-class drivers pepper the entry list to relive former glories, including Darren Turner (Aston Martin DBR9), Bobby Verdon-Roe (Lister Storm), Cor Euser (Marcos Mantara LM600), Johnny Mowlem (Saleen S7-R), Benoit Treluyer (Chrysler Viper GTS-R) and Michael Bartels (Maserati MC12 GT1, right).

vitaphone
MEDION

WARNER

J BLOXHAM

5 Sideways to victory in the Huff style

Driving a 60-year-old Jaguar E-type like it was a Ford Escort rally car may not seem the fastest way around Goodwood, but that's exactly what Rob Huff does in the Moss Trophy.

Former World Touring Car champion Huff is one of those remarkably versatile all-rounders who can make anything go quickly — and he simply loves his historic racing. Armed with the 1962 E-type fixed head coupe of his long-time historic racing partner Richard Meins, Huff will make for outstanding viewing in the 20-minute sprint on Sunday afternoon for closed cockpit GT cars in the spirit of the RAC TT races held at Goodwood from 1958 to 1964.

Huff will be firmly in the mix in a quality grid of E-types, Ferraris and Aston Martins. His default setting in this type of car is oversteer, so make sure you find a good vantage point to see him doing what he does best. Glorious power slides, notably through Woodcote, are the name of the game from a driver who knows how to put on a show for the crowd.

6 The Edwardians are back

Now an established highlight of the Members' Meeting, the SF Edge Trophy is a glorious evocation of the early days of the sport.

Run over two five-lap sprints, the SF Edge Trophy is open to Edwardian racing cars and aero-engined specials from the early 20th century. All of the cars are at least 100 years old.

Selwyn Francis Edge was a pioneer manufacturer and racer in the years before and after the First World War. Though Australian-born, he made his home in Sussex.

The grid is gloriously eclectic, ranging from small and skeletal to huge fire-breathing machines. The oldest is the 1903 Mercedes of Archie Collings but it is Ben Collings who will be among the pacesetters in the 1909 Blitzen Benz from the Sinsheim Museum.

Duncan Pittaway is back with his sensational Fiat S76 'Beast of Turin' but perhaps the most spectacular of all will be the Darracq 200hp of Mark Walker. Perched on top of the land speed record car, Walker is a joy to behold as he pushes the Darracq (below) to the limit.

J BLOXHAM

J BLOXHAM

7 Another D-type treat

Chances to see original Jaguar D-types in race action are steadily becoming restricted to the really big historic racing occasions. However, with cars that will soon be 70 years old and with values running into many millions, it is not hard to see why owners are careful about how often they allow them on track.

Thankfully, the Members' Meeting is one such occasion and the 1955 long-nose cars of Gary Pearson and Andy Wallace will be a joy to behold as they are driven the way they were intended. Pearson is a Jaguar man through and through, while Wallace was a Le Mans winner for the marque in 1988 and is an accomplished historic racer.

Yet, even their talents will be up against it in the Salvadori Cup. The entry list includes later and more powerful cars, including Lister Knobblies in the hands of drivers such as Martin Stretton, as well as a remarkable turnout of six Lotus 15s.

Wherever they are in the pack, take time to look out for Pearson and Wallace. You'll see a motor racing icon being driven on the limit.

8 Tin-top ace Gordon Spice remembered

Ever since the Members' Meeting was first revived back in 2014, the Gerry Marshall Trophy for Group 1 Touring Cars has been an absolute highlight. At that time, this era of tin-top history was largely overlooked but now it has blossomed and grown. The Marshall tag has now gone elsewhere and so the 2023 edition will instead honour another leading exponent of the era, Gordon Spice.

Motorcraft
Autocar
8
GOODYEAR

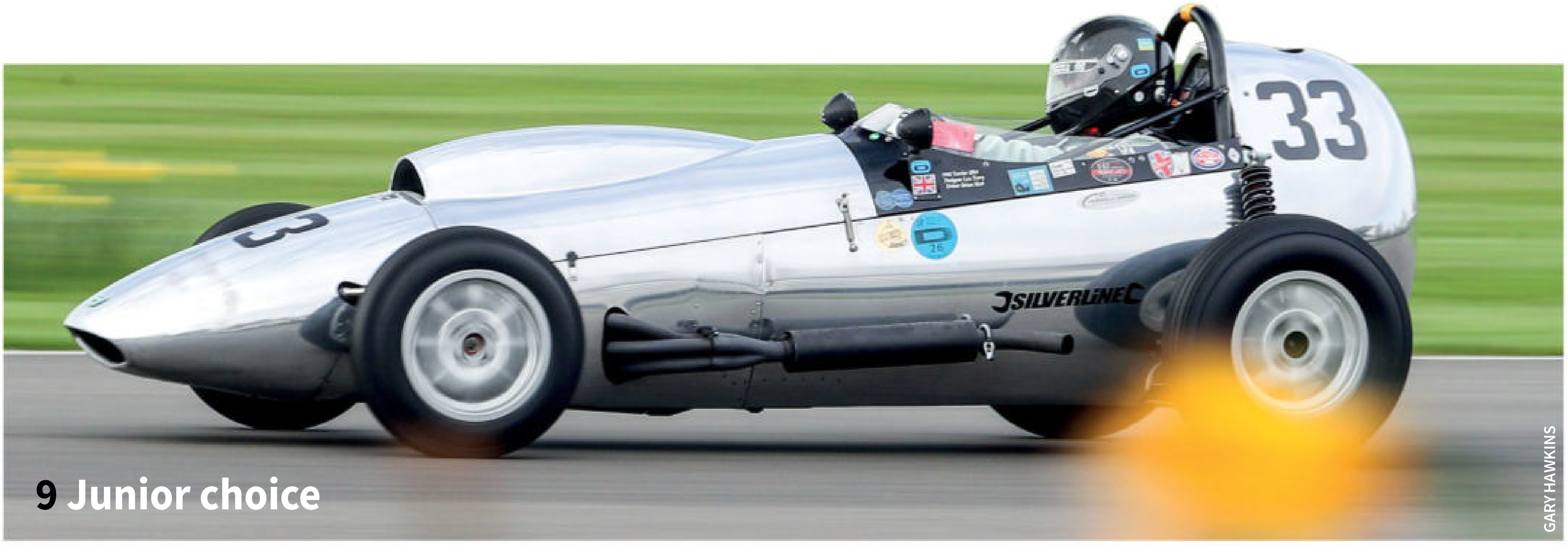
J BLOXHAM

Spice is best remembered for his red three-litre Ford Capris. That icon of the 1970s British Saloon Car Championship is well represented this weekend. A mammoth 60-car entry is split, at 2500cc, into two heats on Saturday afternoon. A 20-minute final will close Sunday's racing.

For sheer grunt, the Ford Mustangs and Chevrolet Camaros will be tough to beat, particularly those in the hands of drivers like Rob Huff, Olivier Hart, David Clark and Craig Davies. Stand-out of a dozen Capris is the Ric Wood car driven by current British Touring Car ace Jake Hill.

Castrol
Marlboro
Castrol Marlboro Castrol
AIR INTER

For some giant-killing, step forward Nick Swift (Mini 1275 GT), Jim Morris (Volkswagen Golf) and Tom Shephard (VW Scirocco).



GARY HAWKINS

9 Junior choice

Few, if any, period racing categories feature as many different marques as Formula Junior. Sunday's racing programme kicks off with the Threlfall Cup for the front-engined Formula Juniors from the first three years of the category's story, 1958 to 1960. It was a time of enormous change in motorsport and Formula Junior mirrored F1 in rapidly evolving to rear-engined cars.

However, before that happened, Junior spawned a huge array of manufacturers and 18 of them are represented on this weekend's 30-car grid. Some, like Lola, Merlyn and U2 were among the first such organisations to offer customer cars at the start of a long history, while the story of other fledgling brands was much shorter.

Look out for the Italian-built Stanguellinis and Volpinis, which clearly took their styling inspiration from period F1 cars, while in the UK Arthur Mallock and Len Terry went their own ways with their U2 and Terrier designs.

Armed with the machine his father built 63 years ago, the evergreen Ray Mallock will renew his rivalry with Chris Drake in the Terrier Mk4 (above) at the head of the pack on Sunday.

J BLOXHAM

10 Bolton takes on the world

The admission of the Chevron B6/B8 dynasty into Goodwood events is a relatively recent development but the timeless design by Derek Bennett, built in a disused mill in Bolton, is a perfect two-litre foil for the big-engined cars in the Gurney Cup.

The very earliest Chevron GTs meet the 1966 cut-off date and Chevrons were around before Goodwood closed for racing that summer. They certainly look the part in a field that takes in at least 10 Ford GT40s as well as a gaggle of open cockpit under two-litre Lotus 23Bs, Elva Mk7s and the sublime Brabham BT5 that owner Geoff Underwood will share with talented youngster Samuel Harrison.

In truth, the B8s will struggle against the more powerful GT40s around the fast sweeps of Goodwood. But compared to the similar Surtees Trophy of a year ago, the absence of the Lola T70 Spyders and early Can-Am McLarens does open up a chance for Bolton's finest.

With drivers of the calibre of Andrew Kirkaldy, Andrew Newall and Ben Mitchell in the BMW-powered Chevron squadron, there might just be an upset or two as Bolton goes head-to-head with Detroit.

TIMETABLE (Note: no Race 13 for reasons of superstition)

SATURDAY 15 APRIL

0730	Gates open
1000	Official practice
1130	Bentley demo
1145	Official practice
1240	Porsche 911 demo
1305	Official practice
1420	**RACE 1 Hailwood Trophy for pre-1983 motorbikes, part 1**
1455	**RACE 2 Gurney Cup for sports-prototypes 1960-66**
1550	Brabham BT52 demo
1615	Official practice
1715	**RACE 3 SF Edge Trophy for Edwardian and aero-engined cars, part 1**
1750	**RACE 4 Gordon Spice Trophy Heat 1 for Group 1 saloon cars 1970-82**
1830	**RACE 5 Gordon Spice Trophy Heat 2 for Group 1 saloon cars 1970-82**
1905	Spectator grid walk
1930	GT1 demonstration

SUNDAY 16 APRIL

0730	Gates open
0920	Official practice
1015	**RACE 6 Threlfall Cup for front-engined Formula Juniors 1958-60**
1050	GT1 demonstration
1120	**RACE 7 Hailwood Trophy for pre-1983 motorbikes, part 2**
1150	Bentley demo
1225	**RACE 8 Jim Clark Trophy for Ford Lotus Cortina Mk1s**
1330	**RACE 9 SF Edge Trophy for Edwardian and aero-engined cars, part 2**
1405	Spectator grid walk
1435	Porsche 911 demo
1500	**RACE 10 Trofeo Nuvolari for sports-racing cars up to 1939**
1540	**RACE 11 Tony Gaze Trophy for road-going sports and GT cars 1948-54**
1620	**RACE 12 Salvadori Cup for sports-racing cars 1955-60**
1655	Brabham BT52 demo
1725	**RACE 14 Moss Trophy for closed cockpit GT cars and prototypes 1958-62**
1805	**RACE 15 Gordon Spice Trophy Final for Group 1 saloon cars 1970-82**
1900	Prizegiving in the Great Hall

THE RACER

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Lawson stuns for shock debut victory

SUPER FORMULA
FUJI (JPN)
8-9 APRIL
ROUND 1/7

Kiwi shared wins with team-mate Nojiri

DUTCH PHOTO AGENCY/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Red Bull junior Liam Lawson stunned the Japanese establishment by scoring victory on his Super Formula debut at Fuji.

By beating his Mugen team-mate and reigning champion Tomoki Nojiri in a straight duel in Saturday's opening race, Lawson achieved what no other driver has managed since the 'modern' era of what was then known as Formula Nippon began in 1996 – a debut win.

It was Nojiri who grabbed the first pole, but Lawson laid down a marker with the third-fastest time in a qualifying session that provided the first action of the weekend following the cancellation of Friday practice due to bad weather.

Come the race, Lawson was able to grab second after a safety car restart that followed a chaotic start, before undercutting Nojiri in the pitstop phase. By pitting a lap earlier than Nojiri, the New Zealander was able to make the race-winning move while his team-mate struggled to get his tyres up to temperature on his out-lap.

Ryo Hirakawa completed the podium in a result reminiscent of his 2022 form – the Team Impul man qualified seventh but had excellent pace in the closing stages.

Nojiri managed to exact revenge in Sunday's race, which he won from pole, while Lawson lost a podium finish due to a five-second penalty for violating safety car procedure. This dropped him from third on the road, behind Nojiri and Inging's Sho Tsuboi, to fifth.

A caution called just before the pit window opened on lap 10 had prompted virtually the entire field to pit in unison, and Lawson, fifth in the queue, tried to back up the pack to give his Mugen crew a chance to service his car and Nojiri's without losing time. He sits second in the standings, 14 points behind Nojiri.

JAMIE KLEIN

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Bell (20) fights it out with Reddick

HARRELSON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Bell finally gets dirt-track win

NASCAR CUP
BRISTOL (USA)
9 APRIL
ROUND 8/36

Three-time Chili Bowl winner Christopher Bell was finally able to cash in on his dirt-race experience in the NASCAR Cup Series.

Bell inherited the lead for the first time by not pitting between stages two and three. His Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota led the final 100 of 250 laps but had to ward off repeated challenges, with the last coming from Tyler Reddick (23XI Toyota) in the final five laps.

Reddick, who won stage two, had pitted for new tyres during the break and put them to good use. He drove from 12th to second and thus put himself in position to challenge for the win down the stretch.

With Reddick closing in for a final attempt at a pass on the last lap, Bell's win was secured when NASCAR was forced to display a caution – the 14th of the race – for the stopped car of Ross Chastain in Turn 4. Bell's victory is his first this season and the fifth of his career. Last year, Bell won three times and advanced to the Championship 4.

"Man, let me tell you, these were some of the longest laps of my entire life," said Bell. "This place is so much fun, whether it's dirt or concrete."

Austin Dillon ended up third, from Ricky Stenhouse Jr and Chase Briscoe.

JIM UTTER

WEEKEND WINNERS

SUPER FORMULA
FUJI (JPN)

Race 1	Liam Lawson Team Mugen (Dallara-Honda)
Race 2	Tomoki Nojiri (below) Team Mugen (Dallara-Honda)

NASCAR CUP
BRISTOL (USA)
Christopher Bell
Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota Camry)

TAMURA/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

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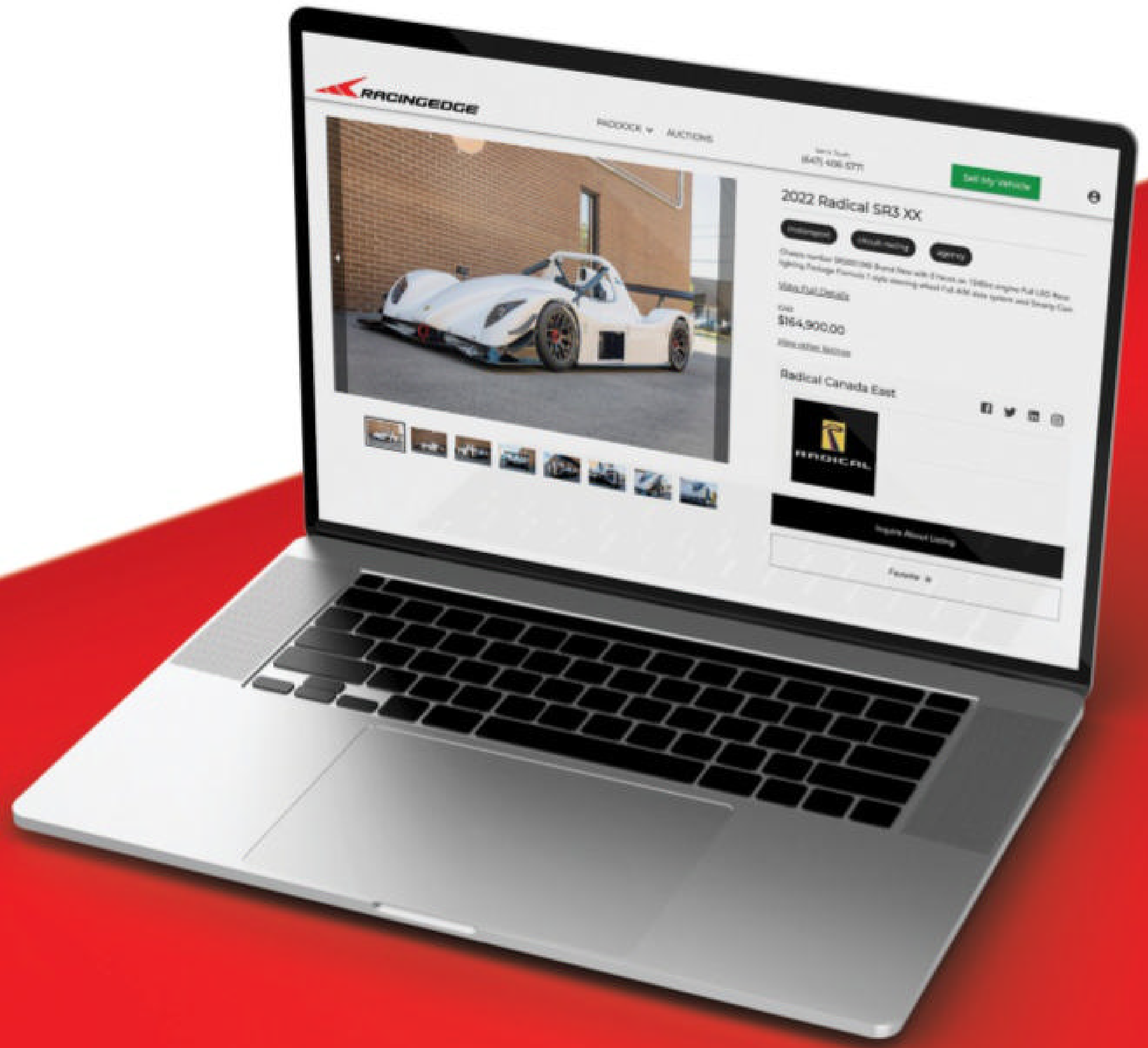
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- A good understanding of the importance of teamwork, efficiency and workshop care and quality are also key to this role. The ability to follow procedures and protocols as documented in our event documentation pertaining to setup, preparation, operation and safety are vital.
- You will also be required to follow all safety regulations and assume any responsibilities or duties delegated by the Race Team / Track Day Manager and Workshop Manager. You will be customer facing so you must have good communication skills and at all times represent FF Corse in the appropriate manner.

Essential requirements:
- A minimum of 3 years motorsport race / technical / mechanical GT experience
- An extensive knowledge of race car preparation, setup & maintenance
- Excellent attention to detail and be keen to learn & take responsibility
- Ability to work within a team but also manage tasks without supervision

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- Feedback any required changes to suppliers.
- Research and implement strategies for continuous improvement.
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- We're looking for a self-motivated team player with a positive and enthusiastic attitude.
- You should be a well-organised individual with a penchant for detail and an understanding of stock management and parts flow in a manufacturing environment.
- You should have a technical background with knowledge of car components and materials used in performance manufacture.
- You should have an ability to read & understand CAD & technical drawings, possess an efficient and systematic approach to working.

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- Prompt publication of accurate and detailed Engineering documents (build specs, etc.) before and after each event and pre-event test (general and performance reports, etc.).
- Detailed, accurate and professional reporting of technical issues utilising the PICR process as required. Also, prompt attention to PICRs according to their priority.
- Deputise for other Senior Engineering personnel as required.
- Work closely with the Team Manager and Chief Mechanic to ensure the highest quality of servicing for cars during rallies.

You:

- Degree or equivalent in a relevant discipline (e.g., Mechanical or Automotive Engineering
- Experience of working in a similar role engineering for a Manufacturer Team in the WRC or Rally Raid.
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Desired Experience:

- Knowledge of transmission and drive train components.
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- A high standard of quality and attention to detail is expected from all our staff, as is the ability to work in a dynamic environment. This job description is designed to help you in the understanding of the role and is not intended to be a definitive list of duties, as flexibility in meeting company needs is required by all employees.

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- Proven ability to work to tight deadline in a group or alone and remain calm under pressure.
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We are looking for candidates that have:

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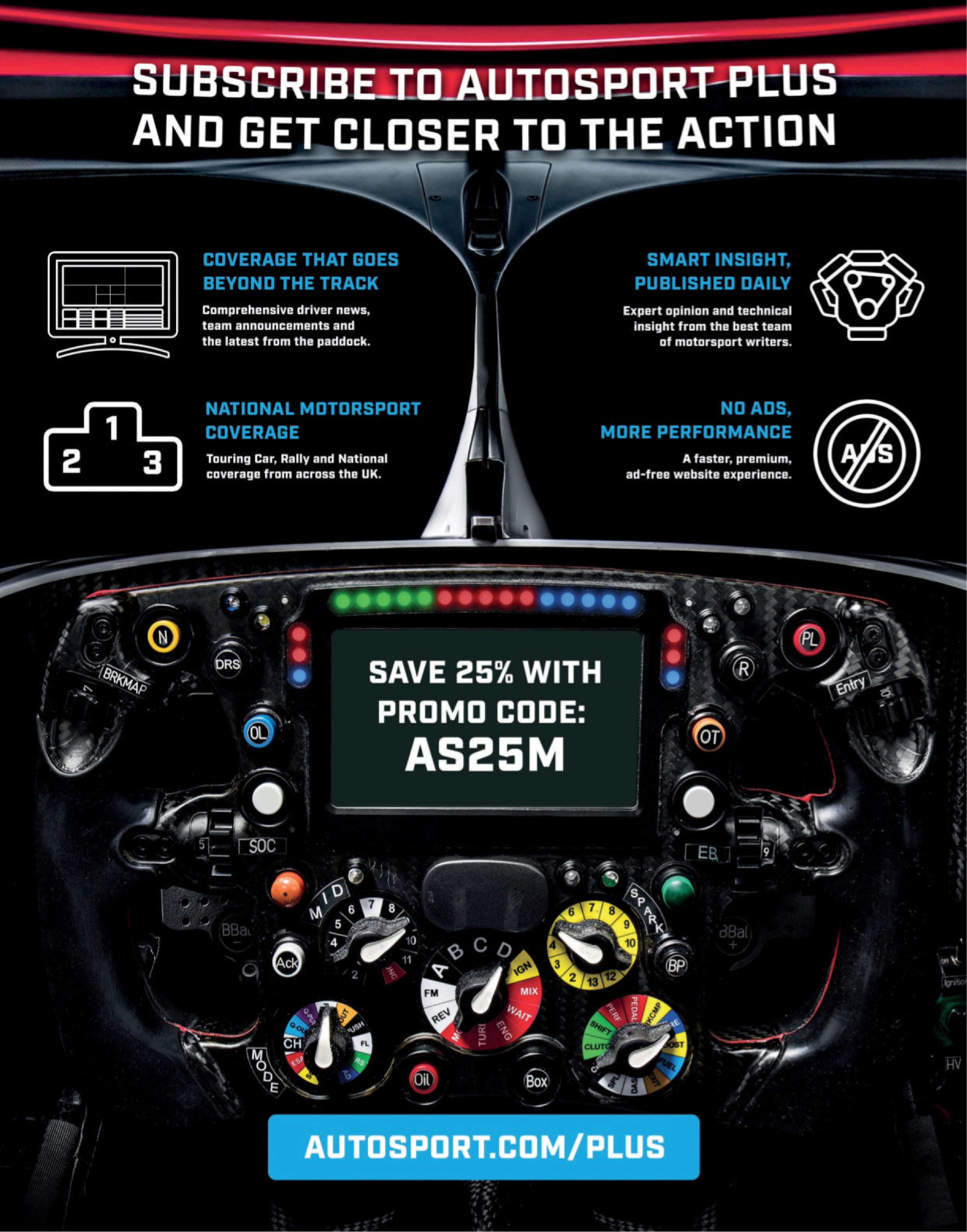
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Centurion Adam wins first British GT battle

Another epic Oulton contest to start the season

O'DONOVAN'S BRITISH RX DEFENCE BEGINS IN STYLE

LOAKE LEADS THE WAY ON GB3 DEBUT

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Front-engined GP cars will get their own grid at this year's Silverstone Festival

Significant GP cars to Silverstone 75th race

HISTORICS

A number of significant front-engined grand prix cars have been confirmed as taking part in the special 75th Anniversary Grand Prix Trophy race at this year's Silverstone Festival, including two that participated in the Northamptonshire circuit's inaugural event.

The 25-27 August historic meeting has been rebranded from the Classic to Silverstone Festival for this season and will feature several races to help celebrate 75 years since the track was first used. The Historic Grand Prix Cars Association is assembling a grid of front-engined machines for a race that will recreate the contests held during the circuit's early years, and a Talbot Lago and ERA from the first 1948 meeting are due to be on the grid.

Frenchman Philippe Etancelin qualified third for the 1948 RAC International Grand Prix in the Talbot Lago T26 that is now set to feature at Silverstone again. Meanwhile, long-time Autosport Technical Editor John Bolster finished sixth in ERA R5B – one of several pre-war machines that featured on that 1948 grid – and this car is also due to be part of the celebrations.

Other, slightly newer, cars among the entry are the BRM P25 that finished fifth in the 1958 British GP, and the Lotus 16 that was the first Lotus single-seater driven by Jim Clark and was also raced to the constructor's first single-seater victory by Graham Hill. The Connaught B-Type raced by Archie Scott Brown in period is also due to be joined by various Cooper-Bristols, Maserati 250Fs and Ferraris.

Talbot Lago from the 1948 GP is due to take part

"As the UK's premier motorsport venue, Silverstone's 75th birthday is of huge significance and we are thrilled to be celebrating such a major milestone with what's clearly going to be a very, very special anniversary race," said event director Nick Wigley. "The entry list is just incredible and to have at least two of the actual cars from the circuit's very first banner race back in 1948 is amazing."

Other special races planned for the event include a Historic Formula Libre affair and a celebration of Jaguar's long association with Silverstone.

IN THE HEADLINES

ALESI'S DIFFICULT ELAN RACE

Ex-Formula 1 driver Jean Alesi's latest historic outing at Paul Ricard last weekend ended in disappointment. The Lotus Elan he shared with Philippe Gache and father-and-son duo Jean-Pierre and Stephane Richelmi in V de V's historic six-hour race was the last of the classified finishers in 20th place, 48 laps down on the victorious Equipe Palmyr Tiga SC79 crew. Britons Ross and Charlie Hyett were 16th in their Tiga.

CLARKSON'S DIFFERENT CARS

With his Shelby Daytona Cobra still being rebuilt after an accident at Spa last year, Chris Clarkson shared the Austin-Healey 3000 of David Smithies to third in class in the Gentlemen Drivers' race at Donington Park last weekend. They also ran Clarkson's Ford Falcon to 12th in the Pre '66 Touring Car race. The Falcon has recently been rebuilt after Emanuele Pirro rolled it at the Members' Meeting at Goodwood in 2021.

JORDAN'S BUSY WEEKEND...

Mike Jordan will race at both Donington Park and Goodwood this weekend. In order to maintain his bid for the Mini Se7en title, Jordan will compete at Donington on Saturday, before heading to Goodwood to race in the Jim Clark Trophy on Sunday. But plans to then dash back to Donington for the second Mini race at the end of Sunday afternoon were scuppered by late timetable changes.

...AND HIS BUSY TEAM

The Jordan Racing Team will field seven Lotus Cortinas in the Jim Clark Trophy at Goodwood. Team bosses Andrew and Mike Jordan will share with David Dickenson and Peter Chambers respectively. The team will also run Ambrogio Perfetti (sharing with Neel Jani), Niall McFadden (with Jochen Mass), Michael Cullen (with Sam Tordoff), Paddy Shovlin (with Tom Kristensen) and Mark Sumpter (with Chris Goodwin, below).

GARY HAWKINS

MERCEDES PRIZE ON OFFER FOR F4 CHAMPION

BRITISH F4

Mercedes has become the latest Formula 1 team to offer a prize experience to this year's British F4 champion.

The eight-time F1 constructors' champion will give the F4 title winner the chance to sample the simulator at its Brackley base for half a day, the driver also receiving coaching and feedback on their performance, as well as a post-session debrief.

Mercedes' offering follows already confirmed prizes from fellow F1 squads McLaren – the champion being embedded within the team at the 2024 British Grand Prix – and Alpine, which is offering a year-long coaching programme.

"On behalf of Motorsport UK and the British F4 Championship, I'd like to thank Mercedes for this generous contribution," said Hugh Chambers, CEO of F4 promoter Motorsport UK. "We are very much about development of our drivers and this prize is a great step in their career. The winner having the simulator experience and the opportunity to engage with Mercedes is fantastic."

Green Biofuels will supply an alternative to diesel in British Truck Championship

GARY HAWKINS

Sustainable fuel to be used by British Truck competitors

BRITISH TRUCKS

The British Truck Racing Championship has pledged to use more sustainable fuels during the 2023 season and into the future.

The championship, which held its opening round at Brands Hatch last weekend, has partnered with Green Biofuels, which will supply advanced Gd+ fuel – made from 100% waste-derived cooking oils and fats and supercharged with an engine-enhancing additive.

Designed as a clean alternative to diesel, all Truck competitors will use Gd+ fuel during the season.

"This is not only a big announcement for the sport but also the industry as a whole, too," said Steve Thomas, Truck Sport UK director. "As one of the premier motorsport series in the UK, it is only right that we stand up and make an impact in the correct way.

"Carving out a sustainable pathway is pivotal for the future of the sport and I'm delighted that we are able to introduce a new cleaner fuel from this season onwards. This is just the first step in our sustainability plans and we're looking forward to growing this relationship over the coming years."

Race winner Hedley seeking further funding for season

GB3

James Hedley is hopeful of completing a full season in the GB3 Championship having taken his maiden win last weekend at Oulton Park.

The 2019 Ginetta Junior champion was a last-minute signing with Arden VRD for the opening round of the season, having raced for Elite Motorsport and JHR Developments last year, when he took a best finish of third.

After finishing an impressive fourth in the first contest in Cheshire, Hedley starred in heavy rain during the second race, launching from fourth on the grid to second before moving ahead of leader Joseph Loake at the end of lap two.

"I think everyone was just on a dry set-up and I think that played to my advantage," he said. "There's a lot of pressure when you're in the lead and, with these cars, you've got to be so smooth on the throttle and I think that's how I managed to get him [Loake]."

Hedley left the meeting second overall in the standings, just five points behind Loake, but confirmed that he was still looking for sponsorship to complete the season.

"That's the plan at the moment [to do the full season] but we do need to raise some more money," he added. "It was important to get some good results and this is everything I can do to make it happen. I'm only going to get better and know the car more and more."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Hedley took maiden GB3 win at Oulton Park

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Zelos (inset) wants to start enjoying racing again

‘Full reset’ for Zelos ahead of 2023 Mini Challenge campaign

MINI CHALLENGE

Former Mini Challenge champion Dan Zelos will continue in the category this year having undergone a “full reset” in the winter to rediscover his motivation after a frustrating campaign last season.

On the back of winning the 2021 title, Zelos could only finish eighth in last year’s standings, managing just three podiums after suffering numerous car problems during the season. After putting those difficulties behind him, Zelos is now intent on enjoying the coming campaign as he remains with Excelr8 Motorsport.

“Last year was tough and, mentally, that affected me quite a lot,” Zelos admitted. “We had so many issues with the car and more than our fair share of bad luck and, on top of that, I put a lot of pressure on myself with the goal of trying to impress people in the BTCC.

“The fun just got completely sucked out of it all and, towards the end of the season, that began to come between me and my dad as well, which I hated. I need to get my mojo back, too, and for that I’ve decided to do a full reset and take everything right back to basics. I’m not putting myself under any pressure or setting any targets; I simply want to enjoy racing again, because that aspect has been missing for a while.”

Hall and Hickton take on Minis

MINI CHALLENGE

Maximus Hall, the reigning Junior Saloon Car champion, claimed rookie class honours on his first appearance in the Mini Challenge Trophy at Brands Hatch last weekend.

A 30-car field gathered for the opening trio of races in this year’s championship, and Hall almost grabbed the race lead in his first start. Fifth overall at the finish and leading newcomer was an impressive debut (inset).

GARY HAWKINS

“The switch to slick tyres is the big difference from the Junior Saloons,” said Hall, who is driving for Westbourne Motorsport. “My first start was great but, in race two, from a bit further back I was on the hill and I’m not used to handbrake starts.”

Hall finished a lap down in the second contest after stopping to report a dashboard warning light, and recovered from the back of the grid to 12th in race three.

Fellow Junior Saloons graduate Harry Hickton was fifth best rookie and 12th overall in race one and progressed to ninth and third in class at the second attempt. Hickton was out of luck in race three, pitting with an ailing car.

BRIAN PHILLIPS

IN THE HEADLINES

GAUNT OUT OF HOSPITAL

Caterham racer Roger Gaunt returned home from hospital last week, after Autosport closed for press, following his sizeable accident in the final 310R contest at Oulton Park earlier this month. He escaped serious injury in the roll and is said to be eager to make a racing return.

SWITCH TO SINGLE-SEATERS

Former Junior Saloons driver Gabriel Doyle-Parfait has switched to single-seaters for this year and was in action at the Nogaro circuit last weekend. The JSCC race winner took a best result of 12th across the three races.

WEEKEND TO FORGET

Tom O’Rourke had a weekend to forget when the British Truck Championship got under way at Brands Hatch, culminating in a huge crash. The Scot was initially credited with a shock pole ahead of defending multiple champion Ryan Smith, until officials discovered his truck’s speed measuring device wasn’t working. He was then penalised to start both of Saturday’s races from the pitlane and, in the second of these, he beached at Paddock Hill Bend after a spin. Dragged clear, he set off to drive back to the paddock until the steering broke and the truck ran straight on at Graham Hill Bend.

VAUXHALL VX220 BACK OUT

National Asphalt Rally champion Simon Mauger debuted his former British GT Vauxhall VX220 (below) in the British Racing & Sports Car Club Supersport Endurance Cup at Snetterton. His ex-Colin Blower Vauxhall was raced in the British GT Championship back in 2004, before being stored for many years. “I did a few races last year with the 750 Motor Club, but this was the first time out in the Vauxhall, which I bought from former hillclimb champion and fellow rally driver Roger Moran,” said Mauger. “Unlike the newer turbo cars, this is old school and lots of turbo lag.”

PETER SCHERER

Gearbox woe no barrier to O'Donovan joy

BRITISH RALLYCROSS

Reigning champion (leading) took two wins at Lydden Hill in 208

TOM BANKS

Reigning British Rallycross champion Patrick O'Donovan dominated the opening instalment of the 2023 campaign at Lydden Hill to begin his title defence in style, but his weekend didn't go perfectly throughout.

Racing a newly acquired Hansen Motorsport-built Peugeot 208 WRX Supercar, the 18-year-old was twice fastest in qualifying on Saturday, and led the first semi-final from the front. But, on lap three, he was forced to retire with a gearbox problem. Usually out of a place in the final, O'Donovan was classified fourth and scraped into the final (starting seventh) by virtue of two cars retiring before him.

Fellow 208 runner Jack Thorne, meanwhile, started on pole and led the final from the front, having won semi-final two, while O'Donovan climbed to fourth on the opening lap, before passing Belgian driver Viktor Vranckx – racing an all-electric car from the World Rallycross support category – then his father Ollie on the next tour. Having closed onto the back of Thorne, O'Donovan took his joker a lap earlier than the leader and took the advantage to win, ahead of Thorne and Vranckx.

Heavy rain hit the Kent venue for the start of Easter Monday's second round, and it was again O'Donovan Jr who was twice fastest in qualifying. But Vranckx won semi-final one ahead of the Saturday winner, while Ollie O'Donovan beat Thorne in semi-final two to take pole for the final.

As the lights went green in the final encounter, Ollie O'Donovan made a good start but was half-spun across the pack from contact and tumbled down the order at Turn 1, while Thorne squeezed through to second behind Vranckx in a chaotic opening corner. But, by the end of lap one, Patrick O'Donovan had passed both Thorne, at the Devil's Elbow, and Vranckx, up Hairy Hill, to take the lead and never looked back. Thorne held on to second while O'Donovan Sr recovered to finish third.

Camp combines Civic Cup with TCR outings

Two top-10 TCR UK results for Camp in Pro Alloys i30

RICHARD STYLES

TCR UK

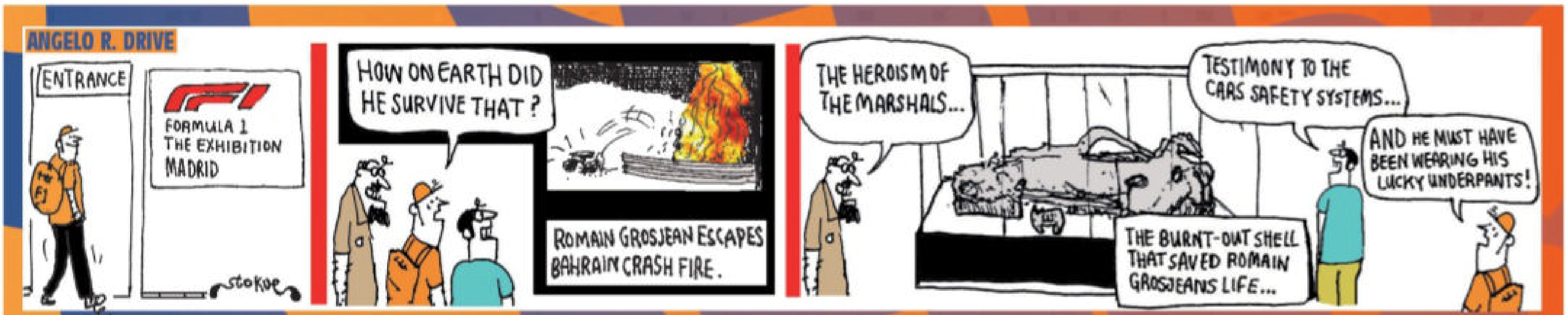
One-time Civic Cup champion Alistair Camp will combine a partial campaign in TCR UK with a full Civic schedule this year, as he targets a full-time graduation in 2024.

Camp has been a Civic Cup frontrunner since 2019, winning the title with Area Motorsport in 2021. For this year, he has moved to Neil Greenland's growing Pro Alloys Racing team, where he also has a driver coaching role.

Pro Alloys helped Camp put together a late deal to join the TCR UK grid at Snetterton last weekend in a Hyundai i30 N. Despite limited running, and switching between cars, Camp qualified 15th of 24 TCR entries and claimed two top-10 finishes.

"Pro Alloys have helped out massively," said Camp. "We're going to do this round and we're hoping to be out at Donington and Silverstone [two weekends without the Civic Cup]."

MARK PAULSON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Artura was pegged back after qualifying but still won race two

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

New McLaren Artura GT4 wins on debut despite BoP setback

BRITISH GT

The new-for-2023 McLaren Artura GT4 won on its debut weekend in British GT, despite its performance being pegged back ahead of the two races at Oulton Park.

The new car was the class of the field in qualifying as Optimum Motorsport's Jack Brown and Charles Clark took dominant poles, with other Arturas run by DTO Motorsport, Paddock Motorsport and Race Lab also near the top of the timesheets.

Ahead of the races, the car's Balance of Performance was tweaked heavily. This included 10kg of weight being added, a raise in ride height at both the front and rear, and a change in engine mapping.

Rain heavily influenced proceedings in the races, though, making it difficult to judge how much difference the changes had made. The highest-placed Artura in the opening contest finished sixth, although Clark had been battling for second on the final lap before a spin.

But, in the second race, the McLarens dominated, Ian Gough and Tom Wrigley (above) winning on their and Race Lab's British GT debut weekend – as Optimum and DTO completed the podium.

Despite the win, Gough believes that the rain masked the performance deficit inflicted on the McLarens. He said: "I think it's always difficult when you get ride height and ballast changes, because it changes the dynamics of the car. I want a consistent base, but I think that's what threw us in the first race."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Luff eyes TCR UK with Fiesta move

FIESTAS

Reigning Civic Cup champion Matt Luff has switched to the Fiesta ST240 series with the aim of progressing to TCR UK.

The 21-year-old Ginetta Junior graduate finished fifth in the Mazda MX-5 Championship before switching to front-wheel drive in the Civic Cup in 2021. He was runner-up in his first season before going one better last year.

"I had a great time in Civics," said Luff, who has joined Simon Hunt's 20Ten operation for his Fiesta campaign. "I learnt loads. I achieved what I set out to do and it's time for a new challenge.

"Fiestas is the right place for me right now. The last time I drove on slick tyres was in karts about six or seven years ago. So it's a massive, massive change, especially the power delivery because it's got a turbocharger. Trying to get used to that is proving challenging, but we're getting there.

"It's a step towards a TCR in the sense that it's slick tyres and it's a bit more power. In the future, it's definitely something that I would like to pursue."

Luff qualified fifth for his Fiesta debut at Snetterton last weekend, recording a best race result of sixth.

MARK PAULSON

IN THE HEADLINES

TURNER BACK TO FIESTAS

Former Fiesta Junior champion Olly Turner returned to the Fiesta fraternity at Snetterton last weekend, taking two fourth-place finishes in the ST240 championship driving a Jamsport-run car. Turner followed the Fiesta Junior title in 2019 with third in the senior version for ST150s and part-seasons in the Volkswagen Racing Cup and British Endurance Championship. "The aim is still to try and get into TCR and dip into some GT racing," he said.

GLOVER SWAPS TO LAMBO

Historic single-seater racer Neil Glover switched to the new Masters GT Trophy at Donington Park last weekend in a Lamborghini Huracan Super Trofeo. "It's a fantastic bit of kit," said Glover of the car, which is being run by Scott Sport and shared with team boss Aaron Scott. However, the pair were forced out by transmission issues. Glover has also recently had the unique Chevron B37 Formula 5000 rebuilt in the colours used by Bruce Allison in period.

AHLERS MAKES COMEBACK

Successful Morgan and historics racer Keith Ahlers has returned to racing after an 18-month break due to cancer treatment. "I've fought to get myself fit for racing again," said Ahlers after three operations and six months of chemotherapy. He raced his Morgan SLR and Cooper Monaco 'King Cobra' at Donington Park, sharing with preparer Billy Bellinger as they start a 20th season together.

LISTER STORMS ONTO TRACK

The FIA GT-winning Lister Storm GTM002 was back out in anger at Donington Park at the end of last month. Driven by Julian Bailey and Jamie Campbell-Walter to the 2000 title, owner Bobby Verdon-Roe was at the wheel for the test (below), along with nephew Martin, and Alex Brundle. "We don't have any plans to race the car, but will demonstrate it at the Goodwood Members' Meeting," Bobby confirmed.

PETER SCHERER

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When to climb the ladder

Staying for a second year in a series or progressing up the ranks has always been a tricky decision, especially so now that F1's newbies are taking more convoluted paths

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Any junior single-seater championship that has attracted 25 drivers onto its grid is clearly doing something right. Even more so when such a strong entry comes at a time of financial hardship. GB3 supremo Jonathan Palmer and his MotorSport Vision team must therefore be congratulated for enticing exactly that many competitors to turn out for last weekend's opener at Oulton Park.

Take a look at those 25 and there is an intriguing mix of backgrounds. Unsurprisingly, a significant number – nine, or 36% – are in their second full year of GB3 competition, seeking to put into practice what they learned in 2022 and progress further in their sophomore seasons. Eight (32%) have previously competed in other European, Asian or American single-seater categories and have been tempted by the GB3 offering – no doubt helped by it now racing on three current Formula 1 circuits. One has stepped up from GB4, another from karting, but a sizeable chunk, 24%, have switched from British F4, well-established as a feeder into GB3. However, if you glance at last year's F4 standings, an interesting question is raised over when is the right time to climb the ladder.

Bearing in mind Alex Dunne blitzed the opposition for much of 2022's F4 campaign, it is perhaps surprising to see four drivers who finished outside the top eight, and were far from regular frontrunners, have jumped up to GB3. These are drivers who you could argue have far from proven themselves at F4 level and are now switching to a car that is a mean machine, generating more downforce and lap times significantly faster than the F4 (at Brands Hatch Grand Prix, for example, the difference in pole between the categories was five seconds). It was therefore not a shock to see that quartet of F4 graduates near the bottom of Oulton qualifying and featuring at the front of the reversed-grid washout.

> **"F1 teams are really appreciating the experience of older drivers to hop in at the right point"**

Every driver is different and there is a multitude of factors that come into play when making a decision over the next step in a career, but it is still intriguing these drivers have opted to spend one year in F4 and then jump ship. Especially when the notion of leaping up the single-seater ladder at breakneck speed is being quashed somewhat. Last year's GB3 champion, Luke Browning, is an intriguing example. The Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award winner has never been blessed with particularly deep pockets and has made a steady climb up the ranks, starting out in Junior Saloons, followed by two years in Ginetta Junior, another two campaigns in British F4 (taking the title in the second), a year in German F4 and then his GB3 success. And he believes mastering each stage before progressing is important.

"I think it's really interesting the way F1 is going and how drivers are coming into it," Browning said on a recent Autosport Podcast. "It's not necessarily these 17/18-year-old kids getting promoted into F1 anymore. Max [Verstappen] set the precedent for that but, ever since, it's really starting to regress. Teams are really appreciating the experience of older drivers to hop in at the right point. Older drivers getting into F1 taking the right step, doing a couple of years in each formula and really gaining that traction of experience is crucial."

When you take a look at the drivers joining F1 this year, he certainly has a point. Only one has stepped up directly from the F2 feeder series, Logan Sargeant. Then you've got Nico Hulkenberg returning to the fray with over a decade of top-level experience, Nyck de Vries getting an F1 shot having sampled sportscars and won in Formula E after taking the F2 title, and Oscar Piastri, who had a year out of racing as Alpine reserve last season.

Back to British F4, where not all of last year's crop are moving on. Fourth-placed Louis Sharp and Daniel Guinchard (ninth) are set to continue, while Ugo Ugochukwu – third in the table – is not leaving F4 and is instead switching to the Italian series. Again, plenty of factors impact those decisions, with age being the key one for Sharp as he does not turn 16 until May. But he still feels a second year in F4 has its benefits. "In terms of driver development, you probably would learn more going up to something new but, at the same time, I think if you can learn to be in the running for a title and to deal with the pressure, that's also a cool thing to learn as well," says Sharp.

Guinchard adds: "I think the second year was wise, just to get a bit more of a handle on car racing. Because I came straight out of karting last year, so that was quite a big step."

Ultimately, it will not be until the end of the season that we find out who made the correct decisions. Those jumping up to GB3 may progress rapidly and succeed with the move – after all, some drivers prove naturally better suited to higher-downforce machinery – while those staying in F4 may not be able to launch title campaigns. Regardless, with Joseph Loake being the star racer at the GB3 opener on debut (after two years in F4) and getting the upper hand over the title favourites, an enthralling season is certainly in store.

➔ P60 GB3 REPORT

2 Seas masters the rain as Adam bags victory on 100th start

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BRITISH GT
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"That was probably the hardest win out of them all." Jonny Adam is no stranger to winning in British GT, and the four-time overall champion once again stood on the top step of the podium after the opening round of the season at Oulton Park.

But this one possibly meant more than the previous 16 wins – not only was it achieved on the Aston Martin factory driver's 100th start in the championship, but it was arguably his most hard-fought victory after immense pressure in changeable conditions over the closing laps.

Adam had been gifted the perfect opportunity to win his centenary race, 2 Seas Motorsport team-mate James Cottingham having handed over their Mercedes-AMG GT3 with a healthy lead after dominating the early stages from pole.

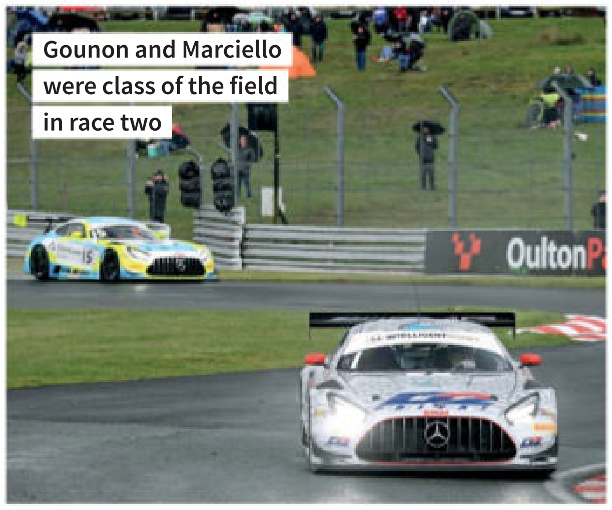
His background driving historic machinery paid dividends in the early stages as occasional light rain made for slippery conditions, with some competitors opting for slicks on the damp track.

Cottingham's 2 Seas team-mate and reigning champion Ian Loggie gave chase, the Scot having got the better of front-row starter Kevin Tse off the line, the latter also dropping behind Richard Neary's Mercedes into Old Hall.

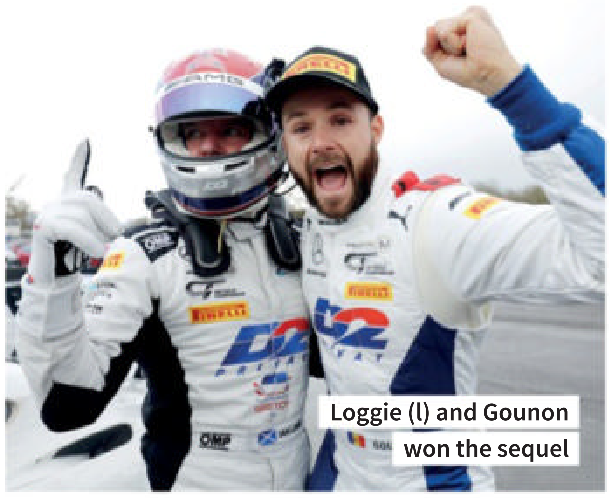
After a brief safety car to retrieve Simon Orange's McLaren 720S GT3 Evo from the Lodge gravel trap on the second tour, Cottingham and Loggie edged away from the chasing pack while Neary became a cork in the bottle for Tse's McLaren, Andrew Howard's Aston Martin Vantage and Morgan Tillbrook's McLaren.

Tse forced through on the inside of Neary into Old Hall on lap seven but, incredibly, Howard went to the inside of both to move up two positions. Meanwhile, behind, Enduro Motorsport's Tillbrook had run wide at Lodge and dropped down the order.

Howard's Beechdean machine made further ground in the mandatory pitstops, moving ahead of Loggie's Mercedes – with Jules Gounon now at the wheel – after the two-time GT3 champion had eradicated the gap over the remainder of his stint.



Gounon and Marciello were class of the field in race two



Loggie (l) and Gounon won the sequel

Cottingham and Adam (4) were never headed in the opening British GT race

With Ross Gunn now at the controls of the Aston, a five-second deficit to Adam stood at just 1.6s prior to a second safety car period after Sam Neary – in for father Richard – lost control of his Abba Mercedes lapping GT4 traffic and went off at Druids.

The Enduro Motorsport McLaren Artura GT4 of Harry George acted as a buffer at the restart between the leading duo, allowing Adam to pull out a pivotal 2.5s lead by the end of the lap.

Behind, Dan Harper had moved into third at the restart at the wheel of the Century Motorsport BMW M4, but had overtaken Gounon fractionally before the startline and earned himself a drive-through penalty.

Marcus Clutton – in for Tillbrook – also got the jump on Mercedes factory driver Gounon but his move was legal. Initially, he struggled to keep pace with the leading pair but, with rain starting to fall again and all drivers on slicks, both he and Gunn began to make inroads on Adam.

SLICKS GAMBLE PAYS OFF FOR ACADEMY

The decision to start on slicks on a slippery and treacherous track proved an inspired move by Academy Motorsport, as its Ford Mustangs filled the top two spots in the opening British GT4 race.

Will Moore and Matt Cowley ran nose-to-tail throughout the opening stint after starting from the pits, scything past their rivals on wet tyres and even led outright briefly as the GT3 field made their pitstops.

The turning point of the race between the two crews came when a safety car was deployed just as Cowley had pitted to handover to team-mate Erik Evans, following Sam Neary's crash. With Moore stopping a lap later, and the field at a reduced pace behind the safety car, team owner Matt Nicoll-Jones was able to rejoin just before the pit exit closed, essentially giving himself a lap over the sister Academy Mustang.

For the remainder of the race, Charles Clark pressured Evans for second, the Optimum Motorsport McLaren Artura driver having taken over from Jack Brown, who had initially led the opening stages from pole before being passed by the Academy duo.

Clark moved briefly ahead at the start of the final lap over the line, but spun through Old Hall and dropped down the order – eventually being classified seventh – with the Raceway Motorsport-run Ginetta G56 of Michael Crees and Tom Holland the main benefactors and completing the podium.

The DTO Motorsport McLaren of Aston Millar and Josh Rowledge had possibly been on for a podium after running in the lead group, but pitting four minutes too early meant they were handed a penalty, which dropped them to ninth. Contact for Josh Miller in the R Racing Aston Martin Vantage meant he and team-mate Seb Hopkins were an early retirement.

Clark made amends for his spin in the sequel by leading impressively from Tom Wrigley's Race Lab McLaren, as Tom Rawlings acted as a buffer to the

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JEP

motorsport IMAGES

With five minutes remaining, the leading trio were together, with Clutton the first to make a move on the inside at Old Hall. But, with the rain getting harder, the McLaren driver began to lose tyre temperature and Gunn retook the position at the same spot on the final tour.

Incredibly, the 2015 British GT4 champion then closed a 1s gap to Adam over the remainder of the lap and looked to the outside into Lodge for the final time. Both ran wide and skimmed the edge of the grass, but retained their positions to the chequered flag as Clutton had dropped too far back to challenge and only just kept Gounon at bay on the line.

Raffaele Marciello finished fifth on his British GT debut after RAM Racing team-mate John Ferguson had been one of the few GT3 runners to start on slicks, while Harper and Darren Leung claimed sixth despite the drive-through.

It was Marciello/Ferguson's turn to suffer a penalty in the sequel, denying them a well-earned victory. In heavy rain, reigning GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup champions Gounon and Marciello were the class of the field during the opening stint, the latter fractionally quicker of the two before running wide at Island Bend. He somehow recovered, and staying out a lap longer than all his GT3 rivals meant that Ferguson rejoined in the lead over Loggie.

But the RAM Racing pitstop had been 1s under the mandatory time, requiring them to serve a penalty, which dropped them back to second – such had been the dominance over the rest of the field.

Marvin Kirchhofer/Alex West finished third having run a solitary race in their Garage 59 McLaren, as Adam/Cottingham, Gunn/Howard and Harper/Leung continued their strong starts to the season by completing the top six in a contest that, remarkably, didn't feature a safety car.

STEFAN MACKLEY

RACE RESULTS

GT3

Race 1 (31 laps) 1 James Cottingham/Jonny Adam (Mercedes-AMG); 2 Andrew Howard/Ross Gunn (Aston Martin Vantage) +0.455s; 3 Morgan Tillbrook/Marcus Clutton (McLaren 720S Evo); 4 Ian Loggie/Jules Gounon (Mercedes); 5 John Ferguson/Raffaele Marciello (Mercedes); 6 Darren Leung/Dan Harper (BMW M4). **Fastest lap** Harper 1m34.501s (102.55mph). **Pole** Cottingham. **Starters** 18.

Race 2 (33 laps) 1 Gounon/Loggie; 2 Marciello/Ferguson +32.209s; 3 Marvin Kirchhofer/Alex West (McLaren); 4 Adam/Cottingham; 5 Gunn/Howard; 6 Harper/Leung. **FL** Marciello 1m43.265s (93.84mph). **P** Gounon. **S** 18.

Points 1 Gounon/Loggie 37; 2 Adam/Cottingham 37; 3 Marciello/Ferguson 28; 4 Howard/Gunn 28; 5 Harper/Leung 16; 6 Kirchhofer/West 15.

GT4

Race 1 (30 laps) 1 Will Moore/Matt Nicoll-Jones (Ford Mustang); 2 Matt Cowley/Erik Evans (Ford) -1 lap; 3 Michael Crees/Tom Holland (Ginetta G56); 4 Carl Cavers/Lewis Plato (BMW M4); 5 Michael Johnston/Chris Salkeld (BMW); 6 Kavi Jundu/Tom Rawlings (McLaren Artura). **FL** Charles Clark (McLaren) 1m43.732s (93.42mph). **P** Jack Brown (McLaren). **S** 18.

Race 2 (31 laps) 1 Tom Wrigley/Ian Gough (McLaren); 2 Clark/Brown +8.572s; 3 Josh Rowledge/Aston Millar (McLaren); 4 Seb Hopkins/Josh Miller (Aston Martin Vantage); 5 James Wallis/Sam Maher-Loughnan (Mercedes-AMG); 6 Dan Vaughan/Zac Meakin (Porsche 718 Cayman). **FL** Wrigley 1m51.903s (86.60mph). **P** Clark. **S** 17.

Points 1 Wrigley/Gough 25; 2 Nicoll-Jones/Moore 25; 3 Clark/Brown 24; 4 Evans/Cowley 24; 5 Rowledge/Millar 17; 6 Holland/Crees 15.

chasing pack in his Paddock Motorsport McLaren.

A shorter pitstop for the Pro-Am pairing of Wrigley and Ian Gough handed the latter the lead, while a problem with his tyres prevented Brown from closing the 5s gap.

He just held on to second at the flag from the charging Millar, team-mate Rowledge having been the first to pass Rawlings, as Hopkins/Miller made up for their earlier disappointment with fourth place.

"I'm still pinching myself that I'm a British GT driver," said Gough, who along with Wrigley and Race Lab, won on their debut British GT weekend.

STEFAN MACKLEY

Moore and Nicoll-Jones came out on top in GT4

Loake and Hedley share the spoils in opener

OULTON PARK
GB3
8 & 10 APRIL

Victory on his GB3 debut for Loake as Rees made it a JHR 1-2 at Oulton

Unpredictability became the norm for the opening round of the GB3 Championship, both in terms of the pecking order and the weather. If picking a pre-season title favourite had been difficult prior to the weekend, then events at the Cheshire venue only further muddied the waters.

British Formula 4 graduate Joseph Loake was the stand-out performer, taking a double pole and winning the opening race comprehensively on his debut. He left Oulton Park with a five-point lead in the standings and a new circuit lap record – a 1m28.619s.

Matthew Rees made it a JHR Developments 1-2 after starting alongside Loake on the front-row and shadowing his team-mate throughout, while fellow GB3 sophomore Callum Voisin (Rodin Carlin) completed the podium in a processional display. The race ended in bizarre circumstances, though, after the stricken car abandoned by Costa Toparis rolled back downhill onto the circuit at Lodge and was just missed by the field before proceedings were halted by the red flag.

Saturday's glorious sunshine was replaced by heavy showers for Monday's action, and James Hedley mastered the conditions in a race that began in confusing fashion. With rain falling, half the field pitted for wet-weather tyres at the end of the first of two green-flag laps, before being allowed out of the pits to retake their original positions.

With the rain getting heavier during the regridding, the decision was eventually taken to allow the slick-shod runners to also change to wets on the grid, necessitating another delay. Once the race got under way, Hedley jumped from fourth and into second by Old Hall, and immediately started challenging leader Loake.

A cutback at the exit of Druids on lap two gave Hedley the inside into Lodge and the lead, with Voisin following through three tours later on the exit of Lodge. Despite having his lead reduced, Arden VRD driver Hedley held on to take his maiden GB3 win, with Voisin and Loake completing the podium.

Max Esterson (Fortec Motorsports) added fourth place to go with his seventh from race one, while reigning British F4 champion Alex Dunne endured a difficult encounter. The Hitech driver ran wide at Cascades and finished 13th, having only managed to claim sixth in the opener.

The full-reversed-grid race turned into a non-event, since the nine-lap contest was essentially run behind the safety car for its duration. McKenzy Cresswell stalled at the start and was collected by Lucas Staico, while front-row starter Shawn Rashid and Voisin were knocked into spins at Old Hall, with all four retiring.

Three laps behind the safety car followed, but it was immediately called upon again after Esterson and Arthur Rogeon went off at Island Bend. Despite 10 minutes remaining, the time it took to retrieve the cars meant the race finished under the safety car.

Hillspeed's Daniel Mavlyutov took the win from pole position, with Elite's Ayato Iwasaki second and Fortec driver Ed Pearson third.

STEFAN MACKLEY

Hedley danced through the rain to win race two

WEEKEND WINNERS

GB3
Race 1 (11 laps) 1 Joseph Loake; 2 Matthew Rees +0.473s; 3 Callum Voisin; 4 James Hedley; 5 Tymek Kucharczyk; 6 Alex Dunne. **Fastest lap** Loake 1m28.619s (109.35mph). **Pole** Loake. **Starters** 25.
Race 2 (10 laps) 1 Hedley; 2 Voisin +1.528s; 3 Loake; 4 Max Esterson; 5 Michael Shin; 6 Souta Arao. **FL** Voisin 1m43.193s (93.91mph). **P** Loake. **S** 25.
Race 3 (9 laps) 1 Daniel Mavlyutov; 2 Ayato Iwasaki +0.718s; 3 Ed Pearson; 4 Shin; 5 Jarrod Waberski; 6 Costa Toparis. **FL** Oliver Stewart 1m55.951s (83.58mph). **P** Mavlyutov. **S** 25.
Points 1 Loake 76; 2 Hedley 71; 3 Voisin 53; 4 Shin 52; 5 Rees 51; 6 Kucharczyk 42.

GB4
Race 1 Jeremy Fairbairn
Race 2 Tom Mills
Race 3 Liam McNeilly

GINETTA JUNIOR
Races 1, 2 & 3 Freddie Slater

GINETTA GT CHAMPIONSHIP
Races 1, 2 & 3 Luke Reade

GINETTA GT ACADEMY
Race 1 Nick White
Races 2 & 3 Ravi Ramyead

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Fairbairn held off Mills in thrilling battle for the win in GB4

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JEP

motorsport IMAGES

Brace for KMR as Mills and Fairbairn star in GB4

OULTON PARK
MSVR
8 & 10 APRIL

GB4 served up a thrilling battle in its season-opener, with 1.9 seconds separating the top five at the finish of the first race. Tom Mills backed up some strong testing form by qualifying on pole, but his KMR Sport team-mate Jeremy Fairbairn made the better start to sweep around the outside at Old Hall.

Mills made several attempts to reclaim the advantage, the pair inches apart through Cascades at one stage, but it was Fairbairn who held on to win. A similarly close battle raged behind with Cooper Webster edging Colin Queen and Josh Irfan to third.

A technical issue for Webster (Evans GP) left Mills alone on the front row for a rain-affected race two. A crash for Queen at Druids and a collision between Fairbairn and Sid Smith triggered two safety-car periods, with Mills prevailing following a final-lap restart ahead of Liam McNeilly and Irfan.

Smith made a great start to lead a damp reversed-grid race three. But he was eventually passed at Druids by Fox Motorsport team-mate McNeilly, who charged from ninth to first in the opening four laps before taking a comfortable victory ahead of Harri Reynolds, with Queen climbing from 10th to third.

Freddie Slater made the perfect start to his Ginetta Junior season with R Racing. He resisted an early challenge in the opening contest from Charlie Hart to pull clear when his rival ran wide at Brittens. Hart recovered to beat Elite Motorsport team-mate Hugo Schwarze to second before a crash for Alisha Palmowski ended the race early.

Slater was unbeatable in Ginetta Junior as he bagged a hat-trick

Hart challenged Slater off the line in race two but then dropped to fourth. Slater triumphed again despite being reeled in by Schwarze and Palmowski late on, while Finn Harrison finished fourth after a three-way scrap with Hart and Reza Seewooruthun.

Palmowski squeezed between Slater and the pitwall to lead the final contest before an early safety-car period after McKenzie Douglass was tagged into a spin at Old Hall and collected Hart. Slater wrestled back the lead at the restart, with Palmowski giving chase until spinning on the final lap during a rain shower, allowing Schwarze and Harrison to complete the podium.

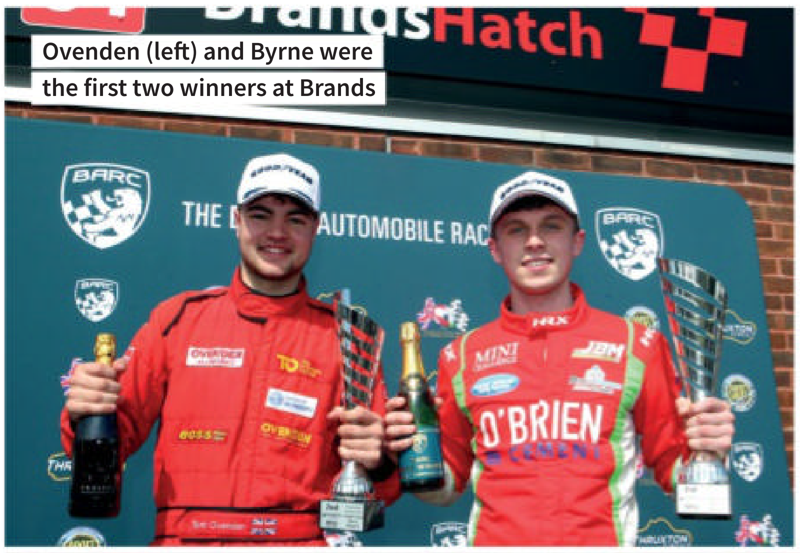
Luke Reade did the hat-trick in the Ginetta GT Championship, leading from lights to flag in the opening encounter ahead of Carl Garnett. Callum Davies lost time in pursuit of Garnett, but held on to third during a feisty final-lap battle with Ruben Hage. Reade recovered from a slow start to quickly reclaim the lead in race two, and overcame a penalty to defeat Garnett. Reade then won race three by nearly 5s.

Nick White and Ravi Ramyead were the class of the GT Academy field, although a spin for Ramyead at Cascades in the first race handed White a comfortable victory ahead of Ed Acres and James Taylor. White led a shortened second contest until a late safety-car period, with Ramyead snatching the lead at the resumption to take the win, with Taylor again third. Ramyead fended off White to win again in the final encounter, while Thomas Shelley profited from a clash between Matt Shaw and Taylor to take third.

STEVE WHITFIELD

Ovenden cooks up an early Mini lead after thrilling opener

BRANDS HATCH
BARC
8-9 APRIL


Ovenden (left) and Byrne were the first two winners at Brands

Round one of this year's Mini Challenge Trophy drew a bumper grid and produced three races full of action at Brands Hatch last weekend, giving Tom Ovenden an early championship advantage with three podium appearances, including a win.

Top billing at this regular Easter spectacular, and much of the spectator interest, was given to five races for the British Truck Racing championship. But some predictable results and inevitable delays meant the Coopers stole the show.

The first 20 Mini qualifiers were bracketed by less than a second, and Ovenden – highest ranked of the 2022 drivers continuing for another year – was feeling extra pressure after securing pole for the season-opener. A poor start didn't help, almost allowing rookie Maximus Hall to grab the lead from third on the grid, but it was Jack Byrne who slotted in front ahead of Nicky Taylor, while Ovenden jostled newcomer Hall back to fourth.

After a caution period to extract a spinner from the Paddock gravel, Ovenden squeezed past Taylor for second place, and soon afterwards found an opening on Cooper Straight to reach the front. Hall lunged for third on the final corner, but lost momentum and slipped behind Alex Solley to fifth in the dash to the line, but still claimed the rookie class.

Race two was delayed after Harvey Riby rolled at Paddock. When the action resumed, Ovenden "ran out of talent" (his words) at Druids and fell to the midfield. In the meantime, Byrne broke clear while up to a dozen cars tripped over each other in the battle for second. Ovenden benefited while others suffered and was surprised to make it back to second place, albeit well behind Byrne. Solley was third, and sixth-placed James Black was top rookie.

Solley triumphed in race three, firmly in control from the start, although the final margin was small with the race ending behind the safety car. This was because Ben Taylor rolled at McLaren, perching his car on its roof atop the tyre wall outside the medical centre, whose services were happily not needed. Ovenden and Byrne were next up, and Black was first rookie again.

Boasting a new machine in eye-catching livery, reigning seven-time Truck champion Ryan Smith comfortably won Saturday's two races, outstripping David Jenkins and Stuart Oliver and prompting Jenkins to acknowledge that the goalposts had been moved again.

If the results were predictable, incidents causing both races to be red flagged were no great surprise either. The second encounter was stopped twice, with positions declared after just three laps. Richard Collett suffered a fiery engine blow-up in front of the pits, ruling him out for the rest of the weekend.

Things were tougher for Smith – and more promising for spectators – on Sunday, thanks to reversed grids. And so it proved, with an overheating Smith fighting his way from a seventh-place start to third, only to later be given a 10s false-start penalty and fall back to sixth. Oliver made a clean

Reigning Truck champion Smith bagged another three victories

Jones was in the thick of the close Pickups action

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: GARY HAWKINS

Three podiums meant Ovenden's Mini title bid got off to a flying start

break from the first corner and remained untouchable, while Jenkins and Simon Reid completed the podium. Oliver won again later from seventh on the grid, but had to defend hard to keep Smith at bay with Jenkins close behind.

Front-row starters Michael Oliver and Tom O'Rourke plunged off together at the first corner of the final, shortening the race. Jock Borthwick led almost half the restarted race but couldn't resist Smith's charge once he got past Reid. Borthwick dropped to third but was punted off by Bradley Smith near the end.

The Pickup Trucks championship has a new format this year, featuring two heats and a part-reversed grid for the final at each meeting. This arrangement made a high-quality start to the season, ending with reigning champion Reece Jones claiming victory in Sunday's final.

Bugner was a double MGOC victor, but it was a close fight

Matt Simpson won the first heat from Dale Gent and Jones, with scarcely a coat of paint between them, and Gent took heat two followed by Jones and Simpson. This made the trio the leading points scorers, which meant a grid disadvantage for the finale.

From fourth on the grid, it took Jones until lap four to reach the front, and a lap later Simpson and Gent had followed Jones through. A failed attempt to take the lead at Graham Hill Bend resulted in a lurid Simpson spin, leaving Gent to chase Jones to the flag. Paul Tompkins was some way back in third.

Seen only on Saturday, the Hyundai Coupe Cup enjoyed a bigger than usual audience, the crowd witnessing Wayne Rockett secure a winning double as he started a limited season. The action behind him was non-stop, with Luca Staccini Anzanello earning two runner-up places and Mark Ridout completing the top three in both encounters.

The South Korean cars' place was taken on Sunday by the MG Owners' Club championship. Race one was dominated by the ZR models of Scott Bugner, Jack Chapman and reigning champion Steve McDermid, who left the rest well behind. Bugner won again from McDermid at the end of the day, when earlier delays made it a tight race against the circuit curfew.

WEEKEND WINNERS

MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY
Race 1 Tom Ovenden
Race 2 Jack Byrne
Race 3 Alex Solley

BRITISH TRUCK RACING CHAMPIONSHIP
Races 1, 2 & 5 Ryan Smith (Daimler Freightliner)
Races 3 & 4 Stuart Oliver (Volvo VNL)

PICKUP TRUCKS CHAMPIONSHIP
Heat 1 Matt Simpson
Heat 2 Dale Gent
Final Reece Jones

HYUNDAI COUPE CUP
Races 1 & 2 Wayne Rockett (below)

MG OWNERS' CLUB
Races 1 & 2 Scott Bugner (ZR)

KUMHO BMWs
Race 1 James Card (E46 M3)
Race 2 Jason West (E46 M3)

CATERHAM GRADUATES SIGMA 135
Race 1 Richard Groom
Race 2 Ben Wheatley

CATERHAM GRADUATES SIGMA 150/SIGMAX
Race 1 Harry Senior (Sigma 150)
Race 2 Harry Cramer (Sigma 150)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

The Kumho BMW entry was poor, but competition for the leading places was fierce in the first race. A bold start by James Card took him ahead of poleman Jason West, and that's how they stayed. The outcome was settled when West had a lengthy trip across the grass. Jas Sapra finished third after sparring partner Bryan Bransom had an engine failure. Sunday's entry was further reduced by drivers honouring an existing commitment to race at Snetterton, and West won easily.

The programme line-up was completed by a quartet of Caterham Graduates races. In typical Caterham slipstreamers, Richard Groom and Ben Wheatley prevailed in the Sigma 135 class. Harry Senior and Harry Cramer won the races for Sigma 150 and Sigmax runners, after Senior dislodged his nosecone and retired second time around.

BRIAN PHILLIPS

A win and a third for Winfield give him the early TCR UK lead

Emotional win for Winfield in TCR UK opener

SNETTERTON
BRSCC
8-9 APRIL

An emotional victory at Snetterton last weekend, followed by a reversed-grid podium, gave Bruce Winfield an early lead in the TCR UK standings.

New cars, new teams and new drivers joining the series for its sixth season have undoubtedly raised the bar. But Winfield, runner-up in 2021 and third in last year's standings, rose to the challenge. His Area Motorsport Hyundai i30 N qualified third fastest, which became second when team-mate Josh Files (Hyundai Elantra N) inherited pole after Bradley Kent's Hyundai Veloster was sent to the back for having an intermittently working wheel-speed sensor.

Files's poor getaway allowed Winfield into a lead he wouldn't relinquish. Team-mate Adam Shepherd (i30) kept in touch until he suffered a tyre delamination, which released Files to close up to the leader. But the TCR multi-champion's Elantra lacked torque exiting corners and, although it was excellent under braking, Files wasn't going to try anything silly.

"Very emotional," admitted Winfield, who lost his father earlier this year. "Getting out of the car crying is not when you want a camera in your face! But it couldn't have been a better start to the championship."

Reigning champion Chris Smiley was satisfied to complete the podium on the new FL5-version Honda Civic's global debut. He snatched third from Lewis Brown's Cupra Leon in traffic, reversing their previous place swap.

Smiley suffered an immediate blow in a hectic reversed-grid sequel, when he spun into the inside barriers exiting Riches on lap one, and Joe Marshall lost control of his Audi RS3 LMS when attacking Brad Hutchison's earlier model for the lead. Instead it was Files, after rapid early progress, who demoted Hutchison with Brown following past. The pair matched each other as they pulled clear, only for the Elantra's engine to blow. So Brown eased to a five-second win on his debut, ahead of Area's i30 twins Alex Ley and Winfield, with Kent's damage-limitation exercise bringing him fourth.

Despite mechanical woes restricting his running in Friday testing and free practice, Dan Thackeray won an eventful Civic Cup opener from pole position. Morgan Bailey passed Thackeray at the Esses on the opening lap, only to slow with gear-selector issues exiting Riches two tours later. Meanwhile Jack Harding, suffering pad knock-off and distracted by Bailey pulling up, went straight on at the Wilson hairpin, giving Thackeray a clear run to victory ahead of Will Redford and series debutant Louie Capozzoli.

Harding recovered to fourth with fastest lap before taking his maiden win on Sunday. He picked his way forward as others squabbled, and took second when Redford's lead challenge was rebuffed by Max Edmundson. Harding then dived inside Edmundson at Brundle on the final tour, only for Edmundson to cut across the grass and take the win, which was later reversed with a penalty that dropped him to second.

Zac Lucas took a pair of commanding Fiesta wins in his JRW Motorsport-prepared car. But it lost ground in the reversed-grid third race by dropping into limp mode following a hit from behind.

As Lucas's fortunes waned, so Alastair Kellett's improved. Disappointed to qualify sixth, the Irishman had picked his way through to third in race one, then claimed a distant second in race two. A lightning start to a chaotic finale jumped him to second behind John Cooper, and Kellett secured victory with a cutback at

Hilton won the Fiesta Junior opener as series attracted 22 cars

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD STYLES

Wilson. Cooper was shuffled back further before being spun into retirement.

After being the Fiesta Junior form driver at the end of 2022, Luke Hilton continued with another win from pole, just overcoming a track-limits penalty to edge debutant Maks Solarski by 0.1s. But Hilton's luck ran out following contact with Ryan Micallef at the Wilson hairpin in race two. His spun car was collected heavily by Jamsport scholar Solarski, ending both their races. With two safety cars and a red flag, scholarship runner-up Micallef won a messy race with little green-flag running, in what is currently scheduled to be a one-off outing.

The inaugural championship race for the Supersport Endurance Cup was won by the BMW 1 Series of Keir McConomy and Bart Horsten. The searing pace of GB3 podium finisher Horsten brought the polesitting car back into contention, and the pair took victory after on-the-road winner Julian McBride (BMW M3) was penalised a minute for a pitstop infringement.

MARK PAULSON

WEEKEND WINNERS

TCR UK
Race 1 Bruce Winfield (Hyundai i30 N TCR)
Race 2 Lewis Brown
(Cupra Leon Competicion TCR)

CIVIC CUP
Race 1 Dan Thackeray (EP3, below)
Race 2 Jack Harding (EP3)

FIESTA ST240s & ST150s
Races 1 & 2 Zachary Lucas (ST240)
Race 3 Alastair Kellett (ST240)

FIESTA JUNIORS
Race 1 Luke Hilton (ST)
Race 2 Ryan Micallef (ST)

SUPERSPORT ENDURANCE CUP
Keir McConomy/Bart Horsten (BMW 1 Series)

MODIFIED FORDS
Race 1 Stephen Scott-Dunwoodie (Sierra RS500)
Race 2 Dave Matthias (Sierra Sapphire Cosworth)

CITYCAR CUP
Races 1 & 2 Elliot Lettis (Peugeot 107)
Race 3 Stuart Bliss (Toyota Aygo)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

PAYTON STARS IN A DIFFERENT KIND OF CORTINA

Payton's self-built machine features Escort Mk2 parts

The Ford Cortina Mk2 is a much rarer sight on track than the Mk1 – specifically the Lotus version, which is ubiquitous in historic touring car racing. But experienced rally driver – and circuit racing novice – Josh Payton is bucking the trend with his stunning self-built machine.

Rather than go for a historic version, Payton has produced a car that's able to compete among the very quick machinery leading the way in the Modified Fords grid.

"I've got a Mk2 Escort I go rallying with, and fancied something a bit different," said Payton, a regular in the Circuit Rally Championship and other mainly asphalt events until he rolled the car at Cadwell Park last year.

After sourcing a two-door Cortina shell, Payton incorporated underpinnings that he's more familiar with. "The six-link [rear suspension] and atlas [axle], and the front suspension and steering rack are based on the Mk2 Escort," he explained.

Even the Group 2-style wheel arches, enclosing 10.5-inch-wide wheels and fat slick tyres, are modified versions of those usually used on Escorts. A 2.5-litre Millington engine developing 319bhp, mated to a five-speed sequential gearbox, gives Payton a fearsome beast capable of giving the Sierra RS500s, Escort RSRs and turbocharged Focuses a fright.

Matthias defeated Payton in race two

Payton's enthusiasm appears boundless – he also drives an Escort Mk4 van in drifting events for "a bit of fun time" – and he hasn't been fazed by the transition to racing with many cars on track together. "It was a little bit daunting to start with," he admitted. "But, after the first lap, it felt all right."

The Cortina's first run was the day before its Silverstone debut last month, where Payton recorded a maiden podium. At Snetterton he qualified ninth before unlocking another 3.5 seconds' pace en route to a double podium. "I've been here before [for the circuit rally]," he said. "But I've been up and down the wrong way and all sorts! I've done a fair few circuit rallies. That's what got me into it, I think. I'd been quite enjoying them."

Ahead of Payton, Steve Scott-Dunwoodie revelled in the increased performance provided by a new six-speed sequential gearbox in his Sierra RS500. After James Allen's polesitting Focus RS spun and was collected at the first corner, Scott-Dunwoodie romped to victory ahead of Dave Matthias's Sierra Sapphire Cosworth. The RS500 looked set for a repeat on Sunday, only to blow a rod through its block on the last lap. Matthias inherited victory, 1.3s ahead of Payton, while Allen charged to third from the back. Absent from Saturday's race with a misfire, Jack Gadd (Escort Mk1 RSR) impressed as he scythed through to second before spinning on oil and ultimately retiring with the resulting slow puncture.

Payton's two strong finishes earned him a pair of licence signatures in his quest – which he hoped to complete at Castle Combe on Easter Monday – for the necessary upgrade to join the Modified Fords' Spa trip in June.

MARK PAULSON

Late pass gives it to Greensall and Spiers

DONINGTON PARK
MSVR MASTERS HISTORIC
7-8 APRIL

Gentlemen Drivers' victory went to Greensall/Spiers in TVR Griffith (14)

An enthralling Gentlemen Drivers' contest headlined the opening Masters event of the season at Donington Park, with Nigel Greensall fending off John Davison in a mighty battle of the TVRs.

For 90 minutes, it was hammer-and-tongs action as the leading TVR Griffiths took on the Jaguar E-type of John and Gary Pearson, as well as the remarkable Ginetta G4R of Robin Ward and Ron Maydon.

John Spiers took the opening stint in his TVR and drove a blistering session to stay ahead despite fierce opposition. He pitted from the lead and handed the car over to Greensall, but the extra pitstop penalty for the over 4000cc TVR, along with Greensall's driver status, cost them half a minute against the Pearsons' E-type.

But the E-type was later docked 10 seconds for not switching the engine off during the pitstop and they were not alone in this infringement. Meanwhile, Davison, going solo in his TVR, took control of the race despite a giant-killing performance from the little Ginetta before it ran out of fuel 10 laps from home.

Over the final half-hour, Greensall was at his very best as he relentlessly hunted down the leaders. Even when oil was deposited, notably at Redgate, he continued his storming performance. With 15 minutes to go, Greensall scythed ahead of the E-type and then set about Davison. In his first race since last summer, Davison was driving superbly, but eventually Greensall's match fitness paid dividends and he dived ahead into Redgate with six laps to go. Even then, Davison retaliated and pushed hard all the way to the flag, finishing just 1.833s behind. "That was a full-on race – John did an amazing first stint," said Greensall.

With their pitstop penalty the Pearsons held onto third, but it was close as Giles Dawson drove an absolute blinder in his Lotus Elan to finish within 1.5s of the E-type on corrected time. Harry Barton and Ollie Reuben put together a solid performance to take fifth in another of the Griffiths in a fabulous start to the Gentlemen Drivers' season.

Sadly, only nine cars started the Masters Historic Sports Car Legends race and it was the Lola T70 Mk3Bs of Gary Pearson/Alex Brundle and Chris Beighton who set the pace. Two separate safety-car periods interrupted the hour-long contest and ensured that the lead Lola never got too far away. The Pearson/Brundle machine was on course for victory before an electrical gremlin two laps from home allowed Beighton through to win.

The Historic Grand Prix Cars Association grids were split into front and rear-engined double-headers and it was Mark Shaw who topped the older cars in his first race weekend with the ex-Julian Bronson Scarab. Shaw started the opener from the pitlane after struggling to get the engine fired, but his task was eased when stablemate Miles Griffiths was twice sidelined by brake issues in the Lotus 16 of Max Smith-Hilliard. In both races, Griffiths was ahead when forced to retire.

Justin Maeers was the class of the rear-engined division in the ex-Barry Cannell Brabham BT11A. Racing the Brabham in the UK for the first time, Maeers won the opener despite a spirited and persistent challenge from the Brabham BT3/4 of Tim Child. In Friday's race, Charlie Martin was on target to join them from the back of the grid when the oil pressure dropped in Paul Waine's Cooper T53 and Martin wisely shut the engine down. Maeers, as he gained experience of the Brabham, won by a bigger margin on Saturday, with Child again leading the rest.

The Masters Endurance Legends and Masters GT Trophy categories both opened their seasons with promise, but with rather slender grids for the second races. Stuart Wiltshire has stepped up to a Peugeot 90X for the top class of MEL and was the class of the field in both races. From the second-division prototypes, Dean Forward/Jamie Thwaites led the chase in their Morgan Pescarolo 01. In the GT contests, the Lamborghini of Craig Wilkins was the class of the pack but lost the second race to an engine issue.

Straight from scoring the second GT Trophy win in a Porsche 911 GT3 Cup, ex-BTCC ace Sam Tordoff jumped into his Ford Falcon to take a commanding solo Pre-'66 Touring Car victory. An extra 30s pitstop penalty due to his driver status simply gave Tordoff's team time to change both rear tyres, and he stormed to victory over the Ford Mustang of the impressive Michael Whitaker Jr.

PAUL LAWRENCE

Maeers took the double in rear-engined races aboard Brabham BT11A

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MICKWALKER

ASTON BARCLAY
18
CRC 65C

CLASS OF THE FIELD Although it came too late to shine in period, as the rear-engined cars took over, the front-engined Scarab F1 has proven to be an effective package in HGPCA races. The Offenhauser-powered car was rebuilt and taken to numerous victories by Julian Bronson and is now in the hands of Mark Shaw. Ex-Formula 3000 racer Shaw has added the 1960 American car alongside his rear-engined Lotus 21 and will race both when HGPCA grids are split.

A STEP UP IN PERFORMANCE Relative racing newcomer Matt Holme has done most of his driving in the 2.0L Cup for pre-'66 Porsche 911s run by Peter Auto and based in France. For this season he has stepped up to a seven-litre Chevrolet Corvette and had his first proper race in it in the Masters Gentlemen Drivers' contest at Donington Park. The 1965 car has a continuous race history in the US but was more recently brought to the UK, and Holme will now race it in Europe with Masters.

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TORDOFF BACK TO HIS ROOTS On his way up the national racing ladder to the British Touring Car Championship, Sam Tordoff enjoyed some success in Porsche Carrera Cup GB and he's now gone full circle, returning to race a 997-model 911 GT3 Cup. For the newly created Masters GT Trophy, Tordoff has acquired a former Carrera Cup car from Norway and entrusted it to the Jordan Racing Team. "It's a 10-year anniversary," said Tordoff of his return to racing a modern-generation 911.

WEEKEND WINNERS

MASTERS GENTLEMEN DRIVERS
John Spiers/Nigel Greensall (TVR Griffith)

MASTERS SPORTS CAR LEGENDS
Chris Beighton (Lola T70 Mk3B)

HGPCA FRONT-ENGINED
Races 1 & 2 Mark Shaw (Scarab Offenhauser)

HGPCA REAR-ENGINED
Races 1 & 2 Justin Maeers (Brabham BT11A)

MASTERS ENDURANCE LEGENDS
Races 1 & 2 Stuart Wiltshire (Peugeot 90X, above)

MASTERS GT TROPHY
Race 1 Craig Wilkins (Lamborghini Huracan EVO)
Race 2 Sam Tordoff (Porsche 911 GT3 Cup)

MASTERS PRE-'66 TOURING CARS
Sam Tordoff (Ford Falcon, below)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Fisher catches a brace after twice narrowly beating Cooper

CASTLE COMBE
CCRC
10 APRIL

Formula Ford provided Easter Monday's closest finishes at Castle Combe as Felix Fisher (TM Racing Ray) and Luke Cooper (Swift Cooper SC20) renewed their rivalry of recent seasons in two breathtaking encounters. Having finally got the monkey off his shoulder by winning 2022's crown, Fisher withstood double champion Cooper by 0.448 seconds and 0.128s, thrilling spectators on a Howard's Day that dawned horribly wet but finished in glorious sunshine.

Returnee Ben Mitchell and Swindon-based Anglo-Pole Lucas Romanek, relishing his Castle Combe debut, each completed a podium. Tom McArthur and double champ Adam Higgins made their presences felt, but Sam Street pulled off a surprise by beating fellow Swift SC92 driver Nathan Ward to Class B gold in the opener. David Cobbold was the Class C standout.

Goverd was a double winner in Hot Hatch
OLLIE READ

Citroen AX man Shaun Goverd walked on water to top Hot Hatch qualifying, then won both races. Challenger Chris Southcott's Honda Civic proved recalcitrant again, breaking driveshafts in both stanzas. Goverd's W-A-S team-mate Shaun Deacon (Peugeot 106 GTI) improved his personal best result from fifth to second in race one, his tyres having outlasted front-row qualifier Jonathan Fish's Renault Clio 172. In the afternoon, Deacon was beaten into third by Geoff Ryall, debuting his Pug. Matthew Hurman (Civic FD2R) stormed from the back to fourth.

Charles Hyde-Andrews-Bird mastered treacherous conditions to plant father Kevin's Porsche 991 on pole for his old man in the GT opener. He watched the reigning champion narrowly repel the advancing Keith Butcher's Lamborghini Huracan stealth bomber – a new combo that bested Chris Everill (Ginetta-Chevrolet G55) and the tenacious Jamie Sturges (VW Golf TCR) – before taking the win.

CHAB dominated the depleted sequel to land his first win at the circuit where he raced saloons as a lad. Dylan Popovic, blasting his G50 from the back, survived a 140mph rotation into Quarry from the rolling start, picked himself up and wrested second, ahead of Sturges and Alan Hamilton (Westfield Aero).

Reigning Saloon champion Adam Prebble started his campaign with a tight double in his reliveried Vauxhall Astra turbo over Rob Ellick's Audi TT. Ellick hurtled from row six in race two to beat top qualifier Mark Wyatt,

Polley defeats Civic rivals for Hot Hatch double

DONINGTON PARK
750MC
10 APRIL

The 750 Motor Club's 2023 curtain-raiser, held in mixed weather at Donington Park, produced some new winners as a number of obvious 'favourites' suffered setbacks.

Ryan Polley (Honda Civic Type R) achieved his first Hot Hatch double, but it was thirsty work. In the opening race, he had to overcome early leader Dan Silvester (in the ex-Kris McCloy Civic) before then defending vigorously from Philip Wright's Civic Type R. Silvester took third as just 0.6 seconds covered the top three. Race two then came to Polley as heavy rain suddenly fell and he drew clear, while Silvester shrugged off Wright for second.

In Class B, there were two maiden wins for Joel Arguelles (Renault Clio 197), while Martyn Paget (Citroen Saxo) was also a first-time winner in Class C before reigning champion David Drinkwater (BMW Compact) prevailed later.

Formula Vee produced two first-time winners. Craig Bell (AHS Dominator) looked to have the opening race won only to skate off on the final lap at a damp McLeans. Elliot Mason (Sheane Mk1), chasing hard after starting on pole, thus took the win ahead of the AHS Dominators of 'title tip' Matthew Hyde and Louis Scholes, who celebrated a podium in his first car race.

Bell made amends by winning race two comfortably after a smoky Mason retired from his mirrors. Hyde missed out on second after stopping trackside just as the red flags flew, meaning Vaughn Jones (Storm Vee) inherited the place. The early dice between Mason and Hyde, in which they traded the lead five times, was top class.

Bell (left) and Mason shared the Formula Vee victories
STEVE JONES

Daniel Garrett overcame a notchy third gear to win the first Locost sprint, restarted after David Martin spun away his early lead and was collected by Paul Clark at McLeans. Garrett surged ahead at the restart while, after fluffing a gear change off the line, Todd Boucher held off David Hitchin for second. Podium challenger Tom Parker was unlucky to retire with mechanical problems late on, and reigning champion Craig Land recovered

Reigning champion Fisher kept the FF1600 hordes at bay

the 2015 title winner who aced Class B in his normally aspirated Astra. Class C MG ZR protagonists James Keepin and James Blake bagged a win each, while Michael Good (Vauxhall Corsa) shook off Anthony Weeks (Citroen Saxo) among the 1400s.

Here for the first time in 12 years, Rod Birley won both Super Saloons races, but the pace and poise of circuit novice Josh Payton in his 2.5-litre Millington-powered Ford Cortina Mk2 was a revelation. The rally convert qualified on pole, fried its wets while leading the opener, then hounded Birley's Escort WRC turbocar home later. Second time out, Tin Tops winner Bradley Lane (Honda Civic EP3 Type R) and BMW veteran Peter Seldon (West Suffolk Racing E36 M3) led the chase.

Lewis Smith's Intermarque Silhouettes double looked assured when, under increasing pressure from brother Daniel, he locked up and smote the barrier at Tower while lapping Nick Crompton's Westfield on the last tour. Crompton had lost out in the Welsh Racing Drivers Association split to Damian Longotano's Millington-powered version.

MARCUS PYE

Top three were separated by just 0.6s in Hot Hatch opener

STEVE JONES

to sixth after tumbling from pole to 23rd on the opening lap. Boucher took advantage of the squabbling behind to win race two from Land and Garrett.

Having only decided to race 48 hours earlier, former European F3 driver Hector Hurst won on his Bikesports debut in a Radical SR3 RSX, aided in part by a misfire for early leader Scott Mittell's Mittell MC-41RR. The ailing Mittell dropped to third before recovering as rain fell to repass Alastair Smart (Radical PR6) for second.

Absent from the first race with a gear selector problem, Mittell's team-mate Charles Hall (Mittell MC-41R) took victory in the second 16-lapper. Mittell led most of it before Hall pounced at Redgate late on. Joe Lock (Spire GT3) was a distant third – some consolation after retiring from race one while in the hunt for the win.

Leon Morrell, the 2021 champion, took both Class B wins in his Radical SR3, although in race one he had to keep Stephen Bell (SR3 RSX) at bay as his wet weather tyres faded on a drying track.

Four-time champion Shaun Traynor (Roadster) won the Toyota MR2 double-header. He was comfortably clear in the first, but later had Karl Johnston (Roadster) – on his car racing debut – up alongside him as they took the flag. Paul Cook (Mk2) was awarded third after crossing the line tied on times with Adam Lockwood.

CARL McKELLAR

WEEKEND WINNERS

CASTLE COMBE

CCRC FORMULA FORD
Races 1 & 2 Felix Fisher (Ray GR05)

CCRC HOT HATCH CHALLENGE
Races 1 & 2 Shaun Goverd (Citroen AX)

CCRC GT
Race 1 Kevin Bird (Porsche 991.1 Cup)
Race 2 Charles Hyde-Andrews-Bird (Porsche 991.1 Cup)

CCRC SALOON CARS
Races 1 & 2 Adam Prebble (Vauxhall Astra turbo, above)

CMMC TIN TOPS/SUPER SALOONS
Races 1 & 2 Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC)

WRDA/INTERMARQUE SILHOUETTES
Race 1 Lewis Smith (Mercedes SLK)
Race 2 Daniel Smith (Mercedes SLK)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

DONINGTON PARK

HOT HATCH
Races 1 & 2 Ryan Polley (Honda Civic Type R)

FORMULA VEE
Race 1 Elliot Mason (Sheane Mk1)
Race 2 Craig Bell (AHS Dominator)

LOCOST
Race 1 Daniel Garrett
Race 2 Todd Boucher

BIKESPORTS
Race 1 Hector Hurst (Radical SR3 RSX, below)
Race 2 Charles Hall (Mittell MC-41R)

TOYOTA MR2s
Races 1 & 2 Shaun Traynor (Roadster)

CALM ALL PORSCHE TROPHY
Steve Hewson (Cayman)

STEVE JONES

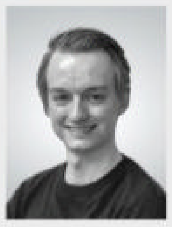
For full results visit: 750mc.co.uk

Favourite Le Mans 24 Hours entries

The centenary edition of the Le Mans 24 Hours is just around the corner. And in the event's illustrious history there's been no shortage of memorable machines that have graced the Circuit de la Sarthe.

Plenty are remembered due to their successes, others because of their spectacular failures, and a few because of their random quirkiness. Autosport's writers have selected their favourites from the event, all for very different reasons.

PHIPPS



PORSCHE 917/20 'PINK PIG'

Perhaps it's no surprise that a Porsche 917 would pop up in this list, but this selection isn't based on pure performance reasons. At the 1971 edition the Porsche 917/20 'pink pig' driven by Reinhold Joest and Willi Kauhsen was fast but untested, running in fifth place before retiring with crash damage. But that butcher meat cut pink livery coupled with the bulky bodywork remains one of the most iconic combinations of all time. What's more, the car's colours did take victory at Le Mans years later, in GTE Pro in 2018, when the #92 Porsche 911 RSR adorned with a tribute livery led home a class 1-2.

HAYDN COBB

DOME S102

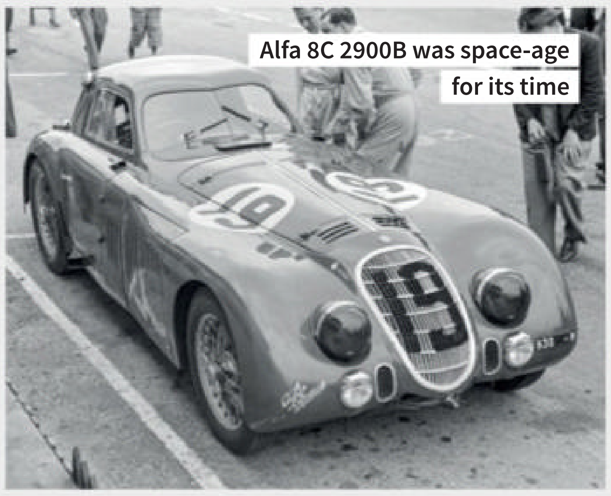
It's hard to think of another Le Mans racer as quintessentially Japanese as the fast-but-flawed Dome S102. The Judd-powered machine, which debuted in 2008, featured a beautiful closed-cockpit design, and unlike its predecessor was campaigned by Dome itself that year. Despite its unreliability, the S102 showed great promise with an impressive eighth on the grid. This was against the dominance of diesel engines at the time, and none of the three Japanese drivers who were part of the project had any prior Le Mans experience. Sadly, the global financial crisis forced Dome to curtail what was planned as a three-year project. But the car would have one final hurrah in 2012 in updated S102.5 guise with the Pescarolo team.

JAMIE KLEIN

RADICAL SR9

There's a special reason for picking an LMP2 car that never finished higher than fifth in class, in 2006, with Rollcentre. It's because of one of my most memorable childhood days out, at the 2007 Silverstone 1000Km, a round of what was then called the Le Mans Series. My name featured alongside those of many other kids on the sidepod of Embassy Racing's Judd-powered car driven by Warren Hughes, Darren Manning and the late Neil Cunningham due to team boss Jonathan France's connection with cleft lip and palate charity CLAPA through son William. That it finished 10 laps down on the class-winning Barazi-Epsilon Zytek scarcely mattered.

JAMES NEWBOLD


Alfa 8C 2900B was space-age for its time

ALFA ROMEO 8C 2900B TOURING

Jaguar's D-type and XJR-9 fired my imagination as a kid, and I've got a picture of a 1971 Porsche 917 long tail on my living room wall, but I'm going for a one-off for this selection. In a time of open cars with mudguards, the Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B Touring must have looked like something from another planet at the 1938 Le Mans 24 Hours. Raymond Sommer and Clemente Biondetti were duly thrashing the field (by around 100 miles!) in the 150mph racer

Dome S102 had no chance to deliver on early promise
JBLOXHAM

Embassy Radical raced with a higher purpose
PATCHING

Can pigs fly? This Porsche was pretty quick in 1971

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

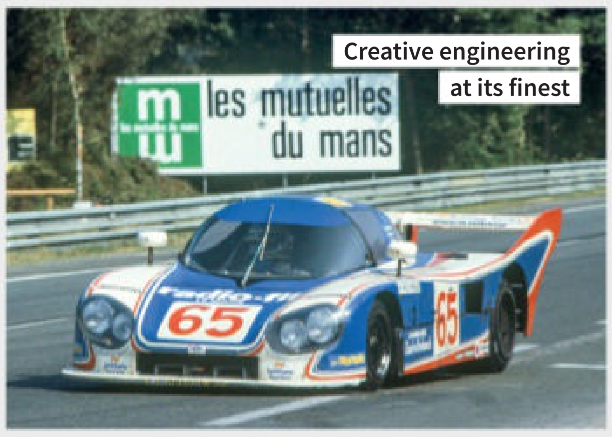
when a tyre failure caused problems that forced it out. Even then, the striking red coupe completed more laps than all but the top two. One of the great Le Mans failures and a fantastic-looking machine.

KEVIN TURNER

DECADENET-LOLA/ADA 01

Few cars epitomised the old spirit of Le Mans, long lost in today's anodyne world, like the DeCadenet-Lola LM cobbled together by the British ADA team for 1982. A T390 tub was rescued from a lock-up, a Porsche 906 windscreen turned upside down, and then DeCadenet suspension bolted to the back of a Cosworth DFV, all for eight grand. The result was an ugly duckling of a Group C machine that achieved little in three Le Mans starts even after another £2000 was spent as it morphed into the ADA 01. But what it did do was get ADA on the grid; the team won Group C2 at Le Mans in 1986 with a reworked Gebhardt and subsequently became a constructor in its own right.

GARY WATKINS


Creative engineering at its finest

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

WEC
Round 2/7
Algarve, Portugal
16 April
TV Live Eurosport 2, Sun 1130, 1430

IndyCar Series
Round 3/17
Long Beach, USA
16 April
TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 2000

IMSA Sports Car
Round 3/11
Long Beach, USA
15 April

NASCAR Cup
Round 9/36
Martinsville, USA
16 April
TV Live Viaplay, Sun 1930

NASCAR Xfinity
Round 8/33
Martinsville, USA
15 April
TV Live Viaplay, Sat 2330

NASCAR Truck Series
Round 7/23
Martinsville, USA
15 April
TV Live Viaplay, Sat 0000

Super GT
Round 1/8
Okayama, Japan
16 April
Livestream on Motorsport.tv, Sat 0600, Sun 0500

MotoGP
Round 3/21
Austin, USA
16 April
TV Live BT Sport 2, Sun 1930
TV Highlights ITV4, Mon 2000

UK MOTORSPORT

Goodwood Members' Meeting BARC
15-16 April
Gordon Spice Trophy, Gurney Cup, Hailwood Trophy, Jim Clark Trophy, Moss Trophy, Salvadori Cup, SF Edge Trophy, Threlfall Cup, Tony Gaze Trophy, Trofeo Nuvolari
TV Live ITV4, Sat 1400, ITV1, Sun 1200
▶ **Livestream** via goodwood.com

Donington Park MSVR
15-16 April
7 Race Series (1600, 420R), Benjafields Bentley Challenge, Lotus Cup, Mini Miglia, Mini Se7en, Northern Saloons/Sports Cars, Snetterton Saloons

Croft 750MC
15-16 April
5Club MX-5 Cup, Club Enduro, Historic 750 Formula, Ma7da, Roadsports, Sport Specials, Sports 1000, Type R Trophy
▶ **Livestream** via alphalive.co.uk

Silverstone MSVR
15-16 April
Bernie's Outlaw V8s/Historic Outlaws, Clubmans Sports Prototypes, EnduroKa, MSVT Trackday Championship, MSVT Trackday Trophy, Sports 2000, United FF1600

Brands Hatch BRSCC
15-16 April
Audi TT Cup, BMW Compact Cup, BRSCC Evolution Trophy, Fun Cup, Mazda MX-5s (Championship, Clubman, Supercup), MG Metro Cup

Cadwell Park BARC
15-16 April
2CVs, British Superkarts, Caterham Academy, CNC Heads Sports/Saloons, JSCC, Legends, Mini Challenge Clubsport, Track Attack

Knockhill KMSC
15-16 April
C1 Cup, Classic Sports/Saloons, Fiesta STs, Mini Cooper Cup, Modsports, Legends, Super Lap Scotland

Mondello Park MPSC
15-16 April
BOSS Ireland, Fiesta STs/Zetecs, Formula Sheane, Formula Vee, Future Classics, Ginetta Junior, Historics, Irish Legends, Irish Supercars, ITCC, Junior Minis, SEAT Supercup, Strykers

NATIONAL MEETING OF THE WEEK
The 80th Goodwood Members' Meeting promises to bring the great and the good of motorsport together, with the usual plethora of on-track action courtesy of historic machinery.

JBLOXHAM

osama
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CAMEL

FROM THE ARCHIVE
Dark clouds passing over the Estoril circuit provide a dramatic backdrop for the Benetton B193B of Michael Schumacher during the 1993 Portuguese Grand Prix. A fortuitously timed and slickly executed pitstop on lap 21 of 71 ensured that sixth-place starter Schumacher held the lead once the Williams pair of Alain Prost and Damon Hill had pitted. Then the decision by his team to forego another stop, plus his determination to bag a second GP victory, entrenched his position, which he held to the flag, the pursuing Prost content not to fight *too* hard as second place was enough to secure the world championship.

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GRIFFITHS

McLaren MP4-17D

For two-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner and long-time Formula 1 tester Alex Wurz, the question of choosing a favourite racing car isn't dictated by how much he raced it. There's something rather simpler behind his pick of the McLaren MP4-17D that took Kimi Raikkonen to within two points of the 2003 world championship.

"I only think, 'I can drive it to its limits in any condition' – empty [tanks], light, alone, against competitors," says Wurz, who was extensively involved in its development as McLaren's test driver. "And the 17D was just the most balanced and joyful and very fast car to drive."

The original MP4-17 appeared in 2002 when, along with the rest of the field, it was blown away by Ferrari's F2002. The first car to result from the matrix structure implemented by Martin Whitmarsh following Adrian Newey's near-defection to Jaguar the previous year managed only a single win, prompting McLaren to throw its weight behind the aerodynamically unstable MP4-18, which Wurz says was "the exact opposite" of the special 17D.

"Things just kept breaking and you had big shunts," recalls the Austrian.

In the knowledge that the new car wouldn't be ready for the start of the 2003 season, McLaren updated the existing chassis and continued to run the renamed MP4-17D throughout the year. The winner of the Australian and Malaysian Grands Prix was a car Wurz describes as "the extension of myself".

GODET

"Regardless of the circuit and the conditions, it always did what the brain wanted it to," he says. "I couldn't wait to drive it because I knew from the out-lap how to slide it, how to not slide it, how to correct it, fast, slow corners. It didn't matter if it was raining, aquaplaning."

Wurz isn't bitter that he never got to reap the rewards of his work on the 17D, "my favourite car by a long way", for himself in race conditions. The only car that comes close, he reckons, was the Peugeot 908 LMP1 with which he won Le Mans for a second time in 2009. "Whatever I wanted it to do, it did. But it wasn't as exquisite as the 17D."

JAMES NEWBOLD

HONE

NEXT WEEK

So it *is* possible

HOW ASTON MADE THE JUMP TO CHALLENGE F1'S BIG THREE

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORSPORT IMAGES

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Autosport Media UK Ltd, The Power House, Isleworth, London, TW7 6QG **Email** autosport@autosport.com
Individual email firstname.surname@autosport.com
Website www.autosport.com **Twitter** @autosport

SUBSCRIPTIONS
UK +44 (0) 344 848 8817 **Overseas** +44 (0) 1604 251451
Email help@asm.secureorder.co.uk **Back issues** 0344 8488817

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Tandem Media
Sales Director **Laura Crawte**
laura@tandemmedia.co.uk
Tel +44 (0) 1233 228754

RECRUITMENT
Head of Motorsport Jobs **James Robinson**
james.robinson@motorsport.com

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION
autosport@tandemmedia.co.uk
Tel +44 (0) 1233 220247

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